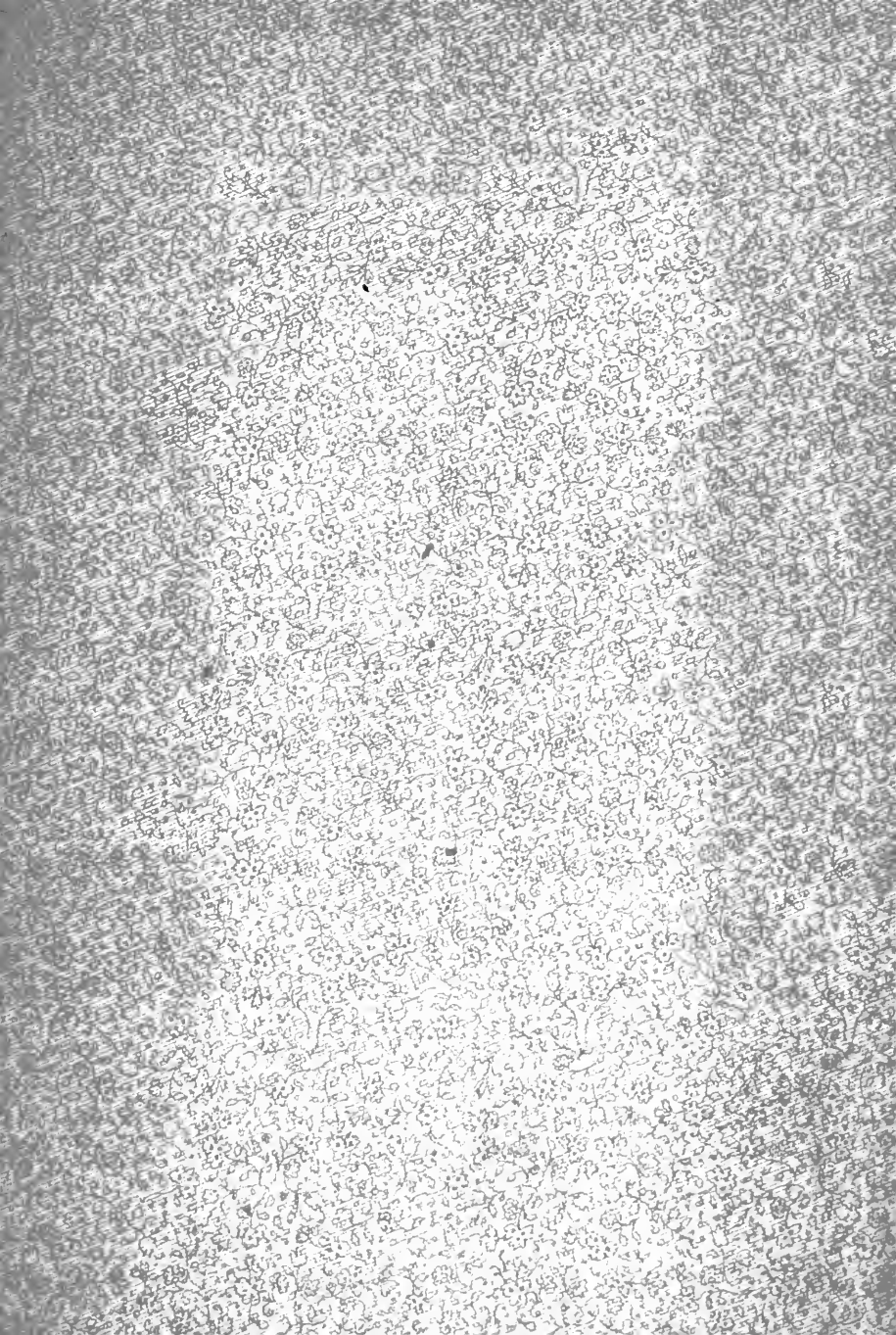


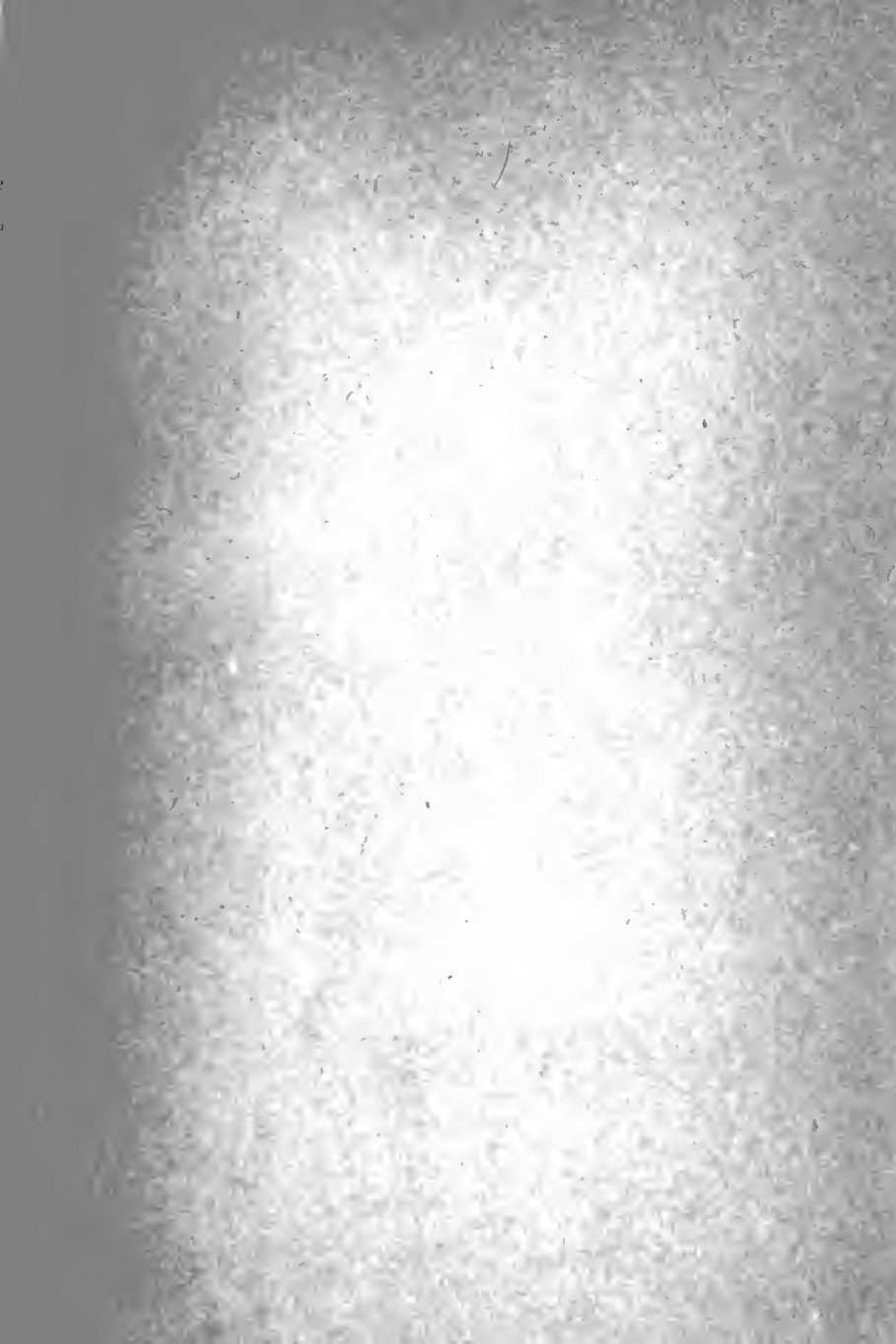




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"'There he is,' said Bride softly to Eustace. 'I think you had better go to him alone.'
Without pausing to rehearse any speech, Eustace walked up to the lonely figure on the rocks, holding out his hand in greeting."—P. 234.

EUSTACE MARCHMONT

A FRIEND OF THE PEOPLE

BY

EVELYN EVERETT-GREEN



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EUSTACE MARCHMONT

CHAPTER I

ON CHRISTMAS EVE

“Yer’s tu thee, old apple-tree,
Be zure yu bud, be zure yu blaw,
And bring voth apples gude enough
Hats vul ! caps vul !
Dree bushel bags vul !
Pockets vul and awl !
Urrah ! Urrah !
Aw ’ess, hats vul, caps vul !
And dree bushel bags vul !
Urrah ! Urrah ! Urrah !”

THIS strange uncouth song was being chanted by moonlight by two score or more of rough West-Country voices. For half-a-mile the sound was carried by the sea-breeze, and all the cottagers within hearing of the chant had run forth to join, both in the song and in the ceremony which it marked.

For it was Christmas Eve, and Farmer Teazel was “christening his apple-trees,” according to the time-honoured custom of the place. And when the trees were being thus christened, there was cider to be had for the asking ; and the farmer’s cider was famed as being the best in all St. Bride’s, or indeed in any of the adjacent parishes.

The moon shone frostily bright in a clear dark sky. A thin white carpet of sparkling frost coated the ground; but the wind blew from the west over the rippling sea, and was neither cruel nor fierce, so that even little children were caught up by their mothers to assist at this yearly ceremony; and Farmer Teazel's orchard had, by ten o'clock, become the centre of local attraction, fully a hundred voices swelling the rude chant as the largest and best trees in the plantation were singled out as the recipients of the peculiar attentions incident to the ceremony.

First, copious libations of cider were poured round the roots of these trees, whilst large toast sops were placed amid the bare branches; all this time the chant was sung again and again, and the young girls and little children danced round in a ring, joining their shriller voices with the rougher tones of the men. The cider can that supplied the trees with their libations passed freely amongst the singers, whose voices grew hoarse with something beyond exercise.

When the serenading and watering had been sufficiently accomplished, guns were fired through the branches of the chosen trees, and the company broke up, feeling that now they had done what was necessary to ensure a good crop of cider-apples for the ensuing year.

But whilst the singing and drinking was at its height, and the moon gazed calmly down upon the curious assembly beneath the hoary old trees in the farmer's orchard, a keen observer might have noted a pair of figures slightly withdrawn from the noisy throng around the gnarled trees that were receiving the attentions of the crowd—a pair that gravitated together as if by mutual consent, and stood in a sheltered nook of the orchard; the man leaning against the rude stone wall which divided it from the farm buildings of one side, the girl standing a few paces away from him beside a sappling, her face a little bent, but a look of

smiling satisfaction upon her red lips. She was clasping and unclasping her hands in a fashion that bespoke something of nervous tremor, but that it was the tremor of happiness was abundantly evident from the expression of her face.

The moon shone clearly down upon the pair, and perhaps gave a touch of additional softness and refinement to them, for at that moment both appeared to the best advantage, and looked handsome enough to draw admiring regards from even fastidious critics.

The man was very tall, and although he was habited in the homely garb of a farm labourer of the better sort, there was a something in his air and carriage which often struck the onlooker as being different from the average man of his class. If he had been a gentleman, his mien would have been pronounced "distinguished;" but there was something incongruous in applying such a term as that to a working man in the days immediately prior to the Reform agitation of 1830. If the artisan population of the Midlands had begun to recognise and assert their rights as members of the community, entitled at least to be regarded as having a voice in the State (though how that was to be accomplished they had hardly formulated an opinion), the country labourer was still plunged in his ancient apathy and indifference, regarding himself, and being regarded, as little more than a serf of the soil. The years of agricultural prosperity during the Great War had been gradually followed by a reaction. Whilst trade revived, agriculture was depressed; and the state of the labourers in many places was very terrible. Distress and bitter poverty prevailed to an extent that was little known, because the sufferers had no mouthpiece, and suffered in silence, like the beasts of the field. But a growing sense of sullen discontent was slowly permeating the land, and in the restless North and the busy Midlands there was a stirring and a sense of coming strife which had not yet

reached the quiet far West. And here was this young son of Anak, with the bearing of a prince and the garb of a labourer, standing beside the farmer's daughter, Genefer, and telling her of his love.

Although he was but one of the many men who worked by day for her father, and slept at night in a great loft above the kitchen, in common with half-a-dozen more men so employed, yet Genefer was listening to his words of love with a sense of happy triumph in her heart, and without the smallest feeling of condescension on her part. Possibly her father might have thought it presumptuous of the young man thus boldly to woo his only daughter; and yet the girl did not feel much afraid of any stern parental opposition; for Saul Tresithny, in spite of a history that to many men would have been a fatal bar towards raising himself, had acquired in the parish of St. Bride's a standing somewhat remarkable, and was known upon the farm as the handiest and most capable, as well as the strongest man there, and one whom the farmer especially favoured.

Genefer was the farmer's only daughter, and had to work as hard as either father or brothers, for since her mother's death, a year or two ago, the whole management of the dairy and of the house had passed into her hands, and she had as much to do in the day as she could get through. Perhaps it was from the fact that Saul was always ready to lend a helping hand when her work was unwontedly pressing, and that he would work like a fury at his own tasks by day in order to have a leisure hour to lighten her labours towards supper-time, that she had grown gradually to lean on him and feel that life without him would be but a barren and desolate sort of existence. Her brothers, 'Siah and 'Lias, as they were invariably called, were kind to her in their own fashion, and so was her father, who was proud of her slim active figure, her pretty face, and crimped dark hair. West-Country women

are proverbially good to look at, and Genefer was a favourable specimen of a favoured race. Her eyes were large and bright, and of a deep blue tint; her skin was clear, and her colour fresh and healthy, and the winter winds and summer suns had failed to coarsen it. She was rather tall, and her figure was full of unconscious grace and activity. If her hands were somewhat large, they were well shaped and capable, and her butter, and cream, and bread were known far and wide for their excellence. She had a woman and a girl to help her in the house, but hers was the head that kept all going in due order, and her father had good cause to be proud of her.

And now young Saul stood beside the old grey wall in the light of the full moon, and boldly told her of his love.

"I'll be a gude husband to yu if yu'll have me, Genefer," he said in the soft broad speech of his native place, though Saul could speak if he chose without any trace of dialect, albeit always with a subtle intonation, which gave something of piquancy to his words. "I du lovee rarely, my girl. Doe try to love me back. I'll serve day and night for yu if thee'll but say the word."

"What word am I to zay, Zaul?" asked the girl softly, with a shy upward look that set all his pulses tingling. "Yu du talk so much, I am vair mazedheaded with it all. What is it yu would have me zay to thee?"

"Only that yu love me, Genefer," answered Saul, taking a step forward, and possessing himself of one of the restless hands that fluttered in his grasp, and then lay still, as if content to be there. "It's such a little word for yu to zay, yet it means such a deal to me."

She let herself be drawn nearer and nearer to him as he spoke; but there was still a look of saucy mischief in her eyes, despite their underlying softness.

"Yu be such a masterful chap, Zaul, I du feel half afear'd on ye. It's all zoft talk now, but the clapper-claw come afterwards."

"Nay, lassie, I'll never clapper-claw yu. Yu needen be afear'd of that. I'll work for yu, and toil for yu, and yu shall be as happy as I can make yu. Only say yu can love me, Genefer. That is all I care to hear yu say to-night."

He had drawn her close to his side by this time, and she was pressed to his heart. He bent his head and kissed her on the lips, and only when a few minutes had passed by, of which they kept no count, did the sudden salvo of the guns cause them to start suddenly apart, and Genefer exclaimed, almost nervously—

"Whatever will vaither zay?"

"Du yu think he will make a bobbery about it, Genefer?"

"Nay, I dwon't know. He is fond of yu, Zaul, but I du not think he will part easy with me; and then——"

"I du not ask that of him, Genefer," broke in Saul quickly; "yu du know that I have no home tu take yu tu yet. It's the love I want to make sure of now, lassie. If I know I have your heart, I can wait patiently for the rest. Can yu be patient tu?"

"Oh, yes, Zaul, so as I know yu love me," answered the girl with a quick blush; "dwon't yu think that is enow for the present? Why need we speak to vaither about it at all? May be it mid anger un. Why shouldn't we keep it a secret betwixt us twain?"

"With all my heart, if yu will have it so," answered Saul, who was fully prepared to wait many years before he should be in a position to marry. That he would one day be a man of some small substance as things went in those parts, he was aware. But his grandfather, from whom he looked to receive this modest heritage, was yet a hale man, and it might not be his for some years to come.

Meantime he had at present no ideas beyond working on with Farmer Teazel, as he had done since his boyhood, and it quite satisfied him to feel that he had won Genefer's heart. He was ready to let this mutual avowal of love remain a secret between them for the present. He had of late been consumed with jealousy of a certain smart young farmer, who paid frequent visits to the Cliff Farm, and appeared to pay a great amount of attention to the pretty daughter who ruled there. It did not take two eyes to see what a treasure Genefer would be as a farmer's wife, and Saul was afraid the girl's father had begun to look with favour upon the visits of young Mr. Hewett. It was this fear which made him resolve to put his fate to the touch on this particular Christmas Eve. He half believed that his love was returned by Genefer, but he could no longer be satisfied with mere hope. He must be certain how things were to be between them in the future; but having been so satisfied, he was quite content to leave matters where they were, and not provoke any sort of tempest by openly letting it be known that he had aspired to the hand of his master's daughter. He knew that his present position did not warrant the step he had taken, yet it was his nature to hazard all upon one throw, and this time he had won. He feared no tempest himself, but he would have been loth to provoke one that might have clouded Genefer's life, and Farmer Teazel could be very irascible when angered, and by no means good to live with then.

Whilst the lovers were thus standing in the corner of the orchard, exchanging vows of constancy which meant more than their quiet homely phrases seemed to imply, an elderly man with a slight stoop in his tall figure and a singularly thoughtful and attractive face, was coming slowly up the long steep slope of down which led to the farm, guided alike by the brilliance of the moonbeams and by the voices singing the rude chant round the apple-

trees. That he was a man occupying a humble walk in life was evident from the make and texture of his garments, the knotted hardness of his hands, and other more subtle and less definable indications; but the moonlight shone down upon a face that riveted attention from any but the most unobservant reader of physiognomy, and betrayed at once a man of unusual thoughtfulness for his walk in life, as well as of unwonted depth of soul and purity of character. The face was quite clean shaven, as was common in those times, when beards were regarded as indicative of barbarism in the upper classes, and were by no means common in any rank of life save that of seafaring men. The features were, however, very finely cut, and of a type noble in themselves, and farther refined by individual loftiness of soul. The brow was broad, and projected over the deep-set eyes in a massive pent-house; the nose was long and straight, and showed a sensitive curve at the open nostril; the mouth was rather wide, but well formed, and indicative of generosity and firm sweetness; the eyes were calm and tranquil in expression. The colour it was impossible to define: no two people ever agreed upon the matter. They looked out upon the world from their deep caverns with a look that was always gentle, always full of reflection and questioning intelligence, but was expressive above all of an inward peace so deep and settled that no trouble from without could ruffle it. Children always came to his side in response to a look or a smile; women would tell their troubles to Abner Tresithny, whose lips were sealed to all the world beside. There was something in the man, quiet though he was, that made him a power in his own little world, and yet he had never dreamed of seeking power. He was at once the humblest and the most resolute of men. He would do the most menial office for any person, and see no degradation in it; he was gentle as a woman and mild as a little child: yet once try to move him beyond the

bounds he had set himself in life, and it would be as easy to strive to move that jagged reef of rocks guarding St. Bride's Bay on the south side—the terror of hapless vessels driven in upon the coast—the safeguard and joy of the hardy smugglers who fearlessly drove their boats across it with the falling tide, and laughed to scorn the customs-house officers, who durst not approach that line of boiling foam in their larger craft.

Abner Tresithny had grown up at St. Bride's Bay, and was known to every soul there and in the neighbouring parish of St. Erme, where Farmer Teazel's farm lay. Perhaps no man was more widely beloved and respected than he, and yet he was often regarded with a small spice of contempt—especially amongst the men folk; and those who were fullest of the superstitions of the time and locality were the readiest to gibe at the old gardener as being a “man of dreams and fancies”—a mystic, they might have called it, had the word been familiar to them—a man who seemed to live in a world of his own, who knew his Bible through from end to end a sight better than the parson did—leastways the parson of St. Bride's—and found there a vast deal more than anybody else in the place believed it to contain.

To-night an unwonted gravity rested upon Abner's thoughtful face—a shadow half of sorrow, half of triumphant joy, difficult to analyse; and sometimes, as he paused in the long ascent and wiped the moisture from his brow, his eyes would wander towards the sea lying far below, over which the moon was shining in misty radiance, marking a shimmering silver track across it from shore to horizon, and he would say softly to himself—

“And she will soon know it all—all the mysteries we have longed to penetrate. All will be known so soon to her. God be with her! The Lord Jesus be near her in His mercy and His love in that struggle! O my God, do Thou be near her in that last hour, when flesh and heart

do fail! Let not her faith be darkened! Let not the enemy prevail against her! Do Thou be very very near, dear Lord. Do Thou receive her soul into Thy hands."

And after some such softly breathed prayer, during which his eyes would grow dim and his voice husky, he would turn his face once more towards the upland farm and resume his walk thither.

The firing of the guns, which told him the ceremony was over, met his ears just as he reached the brow of the hill, and he began to meet the cottagers and fisher-folk streaming away. They all greeted him by name, and he returned their greetings gently: but he could not refrain from a gentle word of reproof to some whose potations had been visibly too deep, and who were still roaring their foolish chant as they staggered together down the slippery slope.

Abner was known all round as an extraordinary man, who, whilst believing in an unseen world lying about us as no one else in the community did, yet always set his face quietly and resolutely against these time-honoured customs of propitiating the unseen agencies, which formed such a favourite pastime in the whole country. It was a combination altogether beyond the ken of the rustic mind, and encircled Abner with a halo of additional mystery.

"Yu should be to home with your sick wife, Nat," he said to one man who was sober, but had plainly been enjoying the revel as much as the rest. "What good du yu think can come of wasting good zyder over the trees, and singing yon vulish song to them? Go home to your sick wife and remember the true Christmas joy when the morrow comes. All this is but idle volly."

"Nay, nay, maister," answered the man, with sheepish submission in his tone, albeit he could not admit any folly in the time-honoured custom. "Yu knaw farmer he

wants a 'bundant craap of awples next year, an we awl of us know tha' the trees widden gi' us a bit ef we didden holler a bit tu 'm the night."

"Nay, nay, Nat, it's not your hollering that makes the trees give of their abundance," answered Abner, with gentle sadness in his tone. "It's the abiding promise of the Lord that seed-time and harvest shall not vail. Go home, go home, and mind thy wife."

"Ay, ay, maister, I'm gwoan," answered the man, and beat a hasty retreat, secretly wondering whether one of these days the black witches wouldn't "overlook" Abner's house and affairs generally, since he was known for a man of such peculiar views. The Duke's head-gardener was looked upon with considerable respect by the mere labourers, and always addressed as "maister" by them. He came of a good stock himself; and from having been so much with the "quality," he could speak pure English as easily as the Saxon vernacular of the peasantry. It was constant conversation with him which had given to Saul his command of language. From the time of his birth till he began to earn his own bread, Saul had lived with his grandfather; and it had been a disappointment to the old man that his grandson had refused the place of garden boy offered him by the Duchess when he was old enough to be of use on the place. Before that he had scared birds for Farmer Teazel, and had done odd jobs about the farm; and to the surprise of all who knew the prestige and advantages attached to the service of the Duke, the lad had elected to continue a servant of the farmer rather than work in the ducal gardens. The grandfather had not attempted to coerce his grandson, but had let him follow his own bent, although he thought he was making a mistake, and was perplexed and pained by his independent attitude.

"He wants to get away from the old 'un—he can't stand all that preachin' and prayin'," had been the opinion

in some quarters ; but Abner knew this was not the case. His grandson had always been attached to him, and the old man had never obtruded his own opinions upon him. Saul's reason for his decision lay beyond any natural desire for an independent home of his own. He had independence of a kind up at the farm, but only of a kind. He was a member of Farmer Teazel's household. He had to keep the hours observed there. He had not nearly such comfortable quarters there as in his grandfather's cottage. He had to work hard early and late, and had none of the privileges accorded from time to time on high days and holidays to the servants at Penarvon Castle. Yet he never appeared to regret the decision he had made, or spoke of desiring to change his condition. This was in one way a satisfaction to Abner ; but he missed the youth from his own home, and was always glad of an excuse to get him down there for a few days.

This was, in fact, the reason of his errand to the farm on this winter evening. To-morrow (Christmas Day) no work would be done, and the day following was Sunday ; so that if Saul would come home with him to-night they would have quite a little spell together before he had to return to his work on the Monday morning.

The farmer saw his approach, and hailed him with friendly greeting, offering him a tankard of cider, of which the old man partook sparingly, as was his way.

"How gwoes the world down to St. Bride's?" asked the master, as he received back the tankard and put it to his own lips. "They du say as the Duchess be mortal bad. Is it trew that the doctors 'a given her oop, poor zoul?"

Abner shook his head mournfully.

"So they du zay," he answered ; "I asked at the castle my own self this even, and they said she could scarce live over the night. St. Bride will lose a kind friend

when it loses her. God be with her and with us all this night!"

Faces were grave and serious as the sense of Abner's words penetrated beyond the immediate circle round him. The Duchess of Penarvon had been long ill: for several years she had been more or less of an invalid; but it had not been known until quite recently that the nature of her malady was so serious as it had now proved to be, and the confirmation of the tidings of her extremity was received with a considerable amount of feeling. The Duke was a stern grave man, just and not unkindly, but self-restrained and hard in his looks and words, whatever his acts might be. But the Duchess was gentle and kindly towards rich and poor alike, and had a personal acquaintance with most of the fisher-folk and cottagers in the parishes of St. Bride and St. Erme. If those who were in trouble could obtain speech with the Duchess, they nearly always went rejoicing home again. If any casualty occurred amongst the fisher-folk in the bay during a winter storm, the Duchess was almost sure to send substantial aid to make up the loss. It was no wonder then that the news Abner brought with him was regarded as a public calamity, and that even those who had drunk most deeply of the farmer's cider were sobered into gravity and propriety of demeanour by the thought of what was passing at the castle down by the Bay of St. Bride.

"I came to fetch Saul to bide with me till Monday," explained Abner. "It makes a bit of company, and my heart is heavy with sorrow for them all. They say that Lady Bride looks as if her heart was breaking. She and her mother have been together almost by night and day, ever since the Duchess's health first failed her so sadly. It'll be a sad day for her, poor young thing, when her mother is taken from her."

"Ay, that it will be," answered one and another, and

heads were gravely shaken. For the position of Lady Bride in stately solitude at Penarvon Castle, without the sheltering protection of her mother's love, was felt even by these unimaginative rustics to be a trying one. It was whispered around that her father had never quite forgiven her for not being a boy. It was hard upon him that their only child should be a girl, incapable of inheriting title or estates. He was not a violent or irascible man, but the disappointment of having no son had eaten deeply into his nature, and there had always been a sense of injured disapproval in his dealings with his daughter, of which that sensitive young thing had been keenly conscious. It had thrown her more and more upon the one parent of whose love she felt secure, and even the unlettered village hinds (who knew a good deal of the tittle-tattle of the servants' hall) could stand mute and struck for a few minutes in contemplating the thought of the terrible blank that would be left in the girl's life when her invalid mother was taken away.

But Abner would not stay to discuss the situation with the farmer and his family. He was anxious to get home, and Saul was quickly found, and appeared ready and willing to go with him. Saul indeed was not sorry just at this juncture for a good excuse to leave the farm for a few days till he and Genefer had had time to get used to the secret that now existed between them. Genefer was quite as much relieved as her lover at this temporary parting. She felt that she should in his presence be in imminent danger of betraying herself a dozen times a day; and as her father would be at home enjoying his brief holiday, he might have leisure to note little symptoms which would pass him by on a working day. Moreover, Mr. Hewett might very likely drive over and bring her some sort of a fairing in honour of the season, and if he did so, and she was forced to be civil and friendly to him, she would just as soon have Saul fairly out of the way.

Grandfather and grandson walked down the hill together, the old man's mind full of the mystery of death, the young man's flooded by that kindred mystery of love—the two most wonderful mysteries of the world. He had been sorry to hear of the extremity of the Duchess; but it seemed a thing altogether apart from himself, and his own new happiness soon banished it from his mind. Not that he had not some feeling that was not happiness mingling with his own bright dreams, as the growingly stern expression of his face testified; and all of a sudden he turned upon his grandfather and asked—

“Do you know who my father was?”

“I cannot say that I *know*. I have my suspicions. But your mother would not tell even me, and she died so soon. Had she lived a little longer I should perhaps have learned more.”

“And so I must always be called Saul Tresithny, though that is not my name by right?”

“It is your name by right, because you were so christened. You may have another name as well, my lad, or you may not.”

The last words were spoken very slowly and sorrowfully, but Saul started as though they stung him.

“I will never believe that my mother,” he began, and then stopped short, his face contracted with passion and pain.

“I trust not also, Saul,” said the grandfather, his face expressing a far keener depth of pain than that of his young companion. “But she may have been deceived—that has been the fate of too many loving and ignorant women; and she came without papers upon her and would speak no word. Illness and sorrow sealed her lips, and there was no time for urging speech upon her of herself. There was but time to point the way heavenwards for the departing spirit. I have left that question with my Maker all these years, and you will have to do the

same, my boy, for I fear the truth will never be known on this side of the grave."

Saul compressed his lips and walked on in silence. His face in the moonlight looked as if carved out of solid marble.





CHAPTER II

THE DUCHESS OF PENARVON

PENARVON CASTLE was a great pile of grey building situated on the commanding promontory of land that jutted out into the sea and formed the division between the two bays of St. Bride and St. Erme.

St. Bride's Bay lay to the south of the castle, and was a small and insignificant inlet, not deep enough to afford anchorage for vessels of any size, and avoided on account of the dangers of the jagged reef on its southern boundary, which went by the name of "Smuggler's Reef." The little bay, however, was a favourite spot for boats and small craft, as its waters were generally smooth, save when a direct west wind was blowing, and the smooth sand of its beach made landing safe and easy. A little hamlet of fisher-folk (and smugglers) nestled beneath the overhanging cliffs, which broke up just at this point and became merged in the green slopes of the downs behind. Smuggled goods landed in the bay could be transported thence without any great difficulty, and not a fisherman in the place but did not have his own private smuggling venture whenever fortune favoured, and his own clientèle amongst the neighbouring farmers and gentlemen, who were glad to purchase what he brought and ask no questions.

The castle faced due west, and on its north side lay the

wider and larger bay of St. Erme ; but the character of the coast along this bay was not such as to tempt either boats or larger vessels, for the cliffs ran sheer down into the sea and presented a frowning ironbound aspect, and the shelter of the bay was sometimes too dearly purchased by vessels running before the gale ; for if they once struck upon one of the many sunken rocks with which its bottom was diversified, they were almost bound to go to pieces without hope of rescue.

The castle was a turreted building of quadrangular construction, and in one lofty turret on all stormy nights a brilliant light was always burning, which had at last become as a beacon to passing vessels, showing them where they were, and warning them especially of those twin and much dreaded rocks called the "Bull's Horns," which lay just beneath the castle walls, forming the northern boundary to St. Bride's Bay, and between which lay a shifting expanse of quicksand, out of which no vessel ever emerged if once she had run upon it.

Upon this eve of the festival of Christmas, late though the hour was, there were lights shining from many windows of the great pile of grey stone—lights that the stranger would believe to portend some festivity going on within those walls, but which in reality indicated something altogether different.

The two doctors summoned in haste earlier in the day had at last taken their leave with hushed steps and grave faces. All that human skill could avail had been done, and done in vain. Throughout the castle it was known that the fiat had gone forth that the gentle mistress whom all loved lay dying—that she would hardly see the dawn of the Christmas morning ; and there was hardly a dry eye amongst the assembled household, gathered together to talk in whispers of the sad intelligence, and to listen breathlessly for any sound proceeding from the part of the house where the dying woman lay.

The pealing of the bell of the outer door caused a commotion in their midst, till the butler, who rose to answer the summons, remarked that it was most likely one of the two parsons come to see the Duchess. The Duke had sent a message to both when the death sentence had gone forth, and this was probably the response.

He went to the door, and sure enough there walked in, with hushed step and awed face, the Rev. Job Tremodart, resident clergyman of St. Bride's, whose parsonage stood not half a mile away.

He was a tall, loose-limbed, lantern-jawed man, with a plain but benevolent countenance, an awkward manner, and a very decided inclination to slip into the native dialect in conversation. He entered with a nervous air, and seemed reluctant to follow the servant up the great staircase to the floor above.

"May be I shan't be wanted," he whispered, trying to detain the man. "Du yn know if her Grace has asked for me?"

"It was his Grace that sent word for you to be told, sir, you and Mr. St. Aubyn, of her Grace's condition," answered the man respectfully. "His Grace is in the little parlour here when he is not in the room. I will let him know you are here."

"Has Mr. St. Aubyn come too?" asked Mr. Tremodart, a look of relief crossing his face; "he will du her Grace more gude than I."

"He is not here yet, sir," answered the butler, and then stood aside and motioned to the clergyman to go on, for at the top of the staircase stood a tall rigid figure, and Mr. Tremodart found himself shaking hands with the Duke almost before he had had time to realise the situation.

"The Duchess will be glad to see you," was the only word spoken by the stricken husband; and whether he would or no, the hapless pastor was compelled to follow his noble host.

The Duke was tall and very spare in figure, and seemed to have grown more so during the past week of anxiety and watching. His hair, which had hitherto been dark streaked with silver, seemed all at once to have silvered over almost entirely. His face was finely cut, and the features gave the impression of having been carved out of a piece of ivory. The eyebrows were very bushy and were still dark, and the eyes beneath were a steely blue and of a peculiarly penetrating quality. The thin-lipped mouth was indicative of an iron will, and the whole countenance was one to inspire something of awe and dread. At the present moment it was difficult to imagine that a smile could ever soften it—difficult, at least, until the Duke approached the side of his wife's bed, and then the change which imperceptibly stole over it showed that beneath a hard and even harsh exterior—too deep perhaps for outward expression—lay a power of love and tenderness such as only a strong nature can truly know.

"My love," said the Duke very quietly, "Mr. Tremodart is here."

"I shall be glad to see Mr. Tremodart," spoke a soft voice from the bed; and in response to a sign from the Duke, the clergyman (visibly quaking) passed round the great screen which shut off the bed from the rest of the room, and found himself face to face with the dying woman.

It was a scene not to be forgotten by any who looked upon it. The Duchess lay back upon a pile of snowy pillows, the peculiar pallor of approaching death lying like a shadow across her beautiful face. And yet, save for this never-to-be-mistaken shadow, there was nothing of death in her aspect. Few and far between as Mr. Tremodart's pastoral visits had been (for he was always fearful of intruding upon the great folks at the castle), he had many times seen the Duchess look more worn and ill

than she did now. The lines of pain, which had deepened so much of late in her face, had all been smoothed away. Something of the undefinable aspect of youth had come back to the expression, and the soft dark eyes were full of a liquid brightness which it was somehow difficult for him to meet. It was as though the brightness had been absorbed from an unseen source. There was a great awe in his eyes as he approached and touched the feeble hand for a moment extended to him.

On her knees beside the bed, grasping the other hand of the dying woman, was a young girl whose face could not at this moment be seen, for it was pillowed in the bed-clothes, whilst the slight figure was shivering and heaving with suppressed emotion. All that could be seen besides the slim graceful form was a mass of rippling loosened hair that looked dark in shadow, but lighted up with gleams of ruddy gold where the light touched it. Mr. Tremodart gave a compassionate glance at the weeping girl. It needed no word to explain the terrible loss which was coming upon her.

"My journey is just done, sir," said the Duchess, with a swift glance from the face of her husband to that of the clergyman. "The call home has come at last. Will you speak some word of peace to me before I go? Let me hear the message that my Lord sends to me. Give me some promise of His to lead me on my way."

The voice was very low, but clearly audible in the deep stillness. Poor Mr. Tremodart twisted his great hands together and felt as though an angel from heaven had asked counsel of him.

"O my dear lady!" he burst out at last, "you know those promises far better than I do. You have no need of any poor words of mine. Your life has ever been a blameless one. It is you who should teach me. God knows I need it. But you, if you are going before His judgment throne, can scarcely have a sin upon your soul.

I stand mute in presence of a holiness greater than any I ever have known."

The eyes of the dying woman were fixed upon Mr. Tremodart's face with an expression he scarce understood.

"Am I to go into the presence of my God clad in the robe of my own righteousness?" she asked with a faint smile.

"O my dear lady, how better could you go?" questioned the confused and embarrassed clergyman. "Surely if ever there were a saint upon earth it is yourself. Everybody in the place knows it. What can I say to you that you do not already know?"

Still the same searching inexplicable gaze fixed upon his face—tender, pitying, regretful. Never had the Rev. Job Tremodart felt so utterly unworthy of his office and calling as at that moment. He had always recognised the fact that he had "never been cut out for a parson," as he had phrased it. He had allowed himself to be ordained and presented with a living in deference to his father's wishes and the pressure of circumstances, and he had striven after his own light to do his duty amongst his illiterate and semi-savage flock. On the whole he had succeeded fairly well to his satisfaction, and was as good a clergyman as many of his brethren around. But somehow, beside the dying bed of the Duchess of Penarvon, he stood shamed and silent, having no word to speak to her save to remind her of her own saint-like life and her own righteousness. Even he felt a faint qualm as he spoke those words, yet their incongruity hardly struck him in its full force. But it was an immense relief when a slight stir without was followed by the entrance of another figure into the room, and he could step back and motion the new-comer to take his place beside the bed. Even the girl raised her head now and looked round with eyes dark-rimmed and dim with weeping. She did not otherwise move, but she no longer kept her face hidden;

she turned it towards her mother with a hungry intensity of gaze that was infinitely pathetic.

"You are welcome, my friend," said the Duchess in the same soft even tone. "I am glad to look upon your face once more. I am going down into the valley at last. The shadow is closing round me. You have brought me some word to take with me there?"

Mr. St. Aubyn came one step nearer and laid his hand upon the nerveless one of the dying woman. He was an older man than his brother clergyman, and one of very different aspect. His face was worn and hollow, as if with thought and toil; his eyes were deep and tranquil, often full of a dreamy brilliance, which bespoke a mind far away. His features, if not beautiful in themselves, were redeemed by a wonderful sweetness and depth of expression. He looked like one whose "conversation is in heaven," and the dying woman's eyes sought his with quiet confidence and joy.

"The shadow truly is there—but the rod and the staff are with all the servants of the Lord who can trust in Him—and the brightness of the eternal city is beyond. Truly the enemy's power is but brief. He can but cast a shadow betwixt us and our Saviour, and we who have the staff of His consolation in our grasp need not fear. To depart and be with Christ is a blessed thing. It is through the grave and gate of death that we pass to our joyful resurrection. There is no fear, no darkness, no shadow that can come between us and that glorious promise, 'I am the Resurrection and the Life.'"

The eyes of the dying woman kindled—filled suddenly with a beautiful triumphant joy. Her lips moved, and she softly repeated the words—

"'I am the Resurrection and the Life'—ah! that is enough—that is all we need to think of when our peace is made."

"Yea, verily—the Lamb of God suffered death for us

to reconcile us again to God: and He rose triumphant from the grave—the first-fruits of them that sleep—for us to know that in the appointed day we too may rise again and be glorified together with Him. And meantime we rest in His peace, awaiting the day of our common perfecting. Ah! and when the trump of the Archangel is heard, it is the blessed dead who rise first, whilst in a moment of time the faithful living are caught away with them to meet the Lord in the air. O blessed, blessed hope for living and dead alike—to meet the Lord and be ever with Him! Surely that is the promise that takes the sting from death and robs the grave of victory. We know not the day nor the hour—that is hid in the foreknowledge of the Divine Father; but we have the everlasting promise—the promise which robs death of its sting, even for those who are left behind—who are parted from our loved ones. For at any moment the wondrous shout of the Lord may be heard as He descends from heaven to awaken the dead and call ‘those that are His at His coming,’ and we may be one with them in the blessed and holy first resurrection. ‘Wherefore comfort one another with these words.’”

The gaze of the clergyman as he spoke these latter words was rather bent on the daughter than the mother, and the dying woman read the thought in his heart and laid her own feeble hand upon her child’s head. The girl’s tears were dry now. Her lips had parted in a smile of wondrous vividness and hope. She clasped her hands together, and her glance sought her mother’s face.

“O mother, my mother—if it might only be soon! O pray for me that I lose not heart—that I may learn to live in the hope in that promise!”

“The Lord will give you help and grace so to live, my child, if you will but trust in Him. Heaven and earth may pass away, but His word will not pass away, and that hope is His most blessed promise. ‘We shall not

all sleep, but we shall all be changed.' O my child, never think to put off the making of your peace with God till the hour of death, as some do. Remember that 'we shall not all die.' It is the life eternal, not the grave and gate of death, upon which our hearts must be fixed. Although I am called to pass through that gate, ask not, my child, for power to die. Ask rather the gift of the everlasting life which will be given without dying at the coming of the Lord. Ask for that coming and kingdom to be hastened, that He will come down speedily upon this rent and riven earth, and cause His reign of peace to begin. Yea, pray for the outpouring of His Spirit in this time of darkness and perplexity. Pray for that great and glorious day when mortality shall be swallowed up of life!"

The Duchess had half risen upon her pillows as she spoke. A strange light was in her eyes. In spite of her physical weakness, she spoke with a power and strength that had seemed impossible a few moments before. Was it the last expiring spark, flashing out with momentary vividness; or was it some spiritual power within her that gave to her this access of strength?

Those about her knew not, yet they hung upon her words with a sense of strange wonder and awe.

To the Duke and the other clergyman this talk was absolutely inexplicable—like words spoken in a strange language. Deeply as the reserved and stern husband had loved his wife, there were subjects that were never spoken of between them, owing to his resolute reserve and reticence. Dry orthodoxy and an upright walk before men had been characteristic of the Duke through life. The fruits of the Spirit, showing forth in love, joy, and peace, and the yearning for light upon the dealings of God with His children, were absolutely unknown to him; and though he knelt with the rest when Mr. St. Aubyn offered a prayer beside the bed of his dying wife, the words spoken

fell meaningless on his ears. He had far more sympathy with the clergyman who had called his wife a saint, and shrunk from striving to speak any words of promise, than with him who was speaking of things so far beyond his ken as to appear to him idle mysticism and folly.

But the peace and joy beaming from those dying eyes told him more eloquently than any words what it meant to her, and he bowed his head and stifled the groan which rose to his lips as he realised that, despite their tender love, they had yet lived so far asunder in spirit that a great gulf already seemed to divide them.

Yet the wife would not suffer herself to be long sundered in spirit from her husband; and when the two clergymen had silently departed, having done all that they could, each in his own way, she summoned him to her bedside by a glance, and brought her mind back to earth again with something of an effort.

"My dear, dear husband," she fondly whispered; and then the groan would have its way, as he took her hand in his and dropped down into the seat beside the bed which had been his for so many long hours during the past days.

The Duchess bent her head softly towards the other side where her daughter knelt, and said in a low voice—

"My child, I would be alone with your father a brief while. Leave me for one short half-hour, then you shall return, and I will send you away no more, my patient darling."

The words of tender endearment brought a rush of tears to the girl's eyes, but she rose without a word, and slipped noiselessly from the room. The mother looked after her with wistful eyes.

"Husband," she said softly, "you will be tender with the child? You will let her take my place with you so far as such a thing is possible. She will try to do her duty by you and by all. You will let that duty be a labour of love?"

"I will do what I can; but I am old to change my ways, and I do not understand young girls. No one can take your place; you talk of impossibilities. O Geraldine! Geraldine! it is too hard to be thus left, old and stricken, and alone. Why must it be?—you so many, many years younger than I. I never thought to be the one left behind. I cannot be resigned. I cannot be willing to let you go. The Almighty is dealing very bitterly with me!"

"Dear husband, the parting will be the shorter that you are well stricken in years," she answered gently, answering him according to the measure of his understanding and feeling. "It will be but a few short years before we meet again in the place where there is no parting. And now, my husband, before I am taken away from you—before this new strength, which, I believe, God has given me for a purpose, be spent—I have a few things to say to you—a few charges to give to you. Will you let me speak from my very heart, and forgive me if in any sort I pain and grieve you?"

"*You* pain or grieve me by any precious words you may speak! That thing is impossible. Let me know all that is in your tender, noble heart. It shall be the aim and object of the miserable residue of my days to carry out whatever you may speak."

The Duchess pressed his hand affectionately, and lay still for a moment, gathering strength. Her husband gave her some of the cordial which stood at hand, and presently she spoke again—

"My husband, we are living in troubled and anxious days. The world around us is full of striving and upheaval. You and I remember those awful struggles in France now dying out of men's minds, and we have indications, only too plainly written on the face of the earth, that the spirit of lawlessness and anarchy thus let loose is seething and fermenting throughout the world."

The Duke bent his head in assent. He well knew such to be the case, but hardly expected that to be the subject of his dying wife's meditations. She continued speaking with pauses in between.

"My husband, perhaps you know that ever since those terrible days, when men began to see in that awful Revolution the first outpouring of God's last judgments upon the earth, godly men and women of every shade of opinion have been earnestly and constantly praying for God's guidance and Spirit, that they may read the signs of the times aright, and learn what are His purposes towards mankind, as revealed in His written Word. I will not speak too particularly of all that has been given in answer to this generation of prayer; but it is enough for me to tell you that Light has come, that the long-neglected prophetic writings have been illumined by the light of God's Spirit to many holy men and women, who have made them their study day by day and year by year, and that rays of light from above have come to us, illuminating the darkness, and showing us faintly, yet clearly, God's guiding hand in these days of darkness and trouble. Do you follow me so far?"

"I understand your words, and am ready to believe that in these things you have a knowledge that I cannot attain unto; but what then?"

"What I would ask of you, my husband, is patience and trust—patience with many things that will seem strange to you, that will seem like a subversion of all your ideas of wisdom and prudence—and trust in God's power to make all things work together for good, and to bring good out of evil. We know that the latter days are coming fast upon us—that the armies of good and evil are gathering for that last tremendous struggle which precedes the reign of the Lord. We know that the strange upheavals we see in the world about us are the beginnings of these things, and that those who would be found faithful must

learn to discern between the evil and the good ; for Satan can transform himself into an angel of light, and deceive, if it were possible, the very elect, whilst God has again and again chosen the weak and despised things of this world to confound the strong ; and it is human nature to turn away in scorn from all such weak things, and look for strength and salvation from the mighty and approved."

The Duke listened with a sigh. He understood but little of all this. Yet every word from his dying wife was precious, and engraved itself upon his memory in indelible characters.

"There are difficult days coming upon the earth : great wrongs will be righted, much that is pure and good will spring up ; and side by side with that much that is evil, lawless, and terrible. Dear husband, what I would ask of you is a patient mind, patience to look at changes without prejudice, and strive prayerfully to discern whether or not they be of God ;—also patience to hear what is said by their advocates, and to weigh well what you hear. Let mercy ever temper justice in your dealings with your dependents ; and condemn not those who are not at one with you without pausing to understand the nature of all they are striving to accomplish. The evil and the good will and must grow up together till the day of the harvest. The wheat and the tares cannot be sorted out till the reapers are sent forth from God. But let us strive with eyes anointed from above to distinguish in our own path that which is good, and not cast it scornfully aside, nor rush after what is evil because it approves itself to the great ones of the earth. I am sure that God will lead and guide all those who truly turn to Him in these times of darkness and perplexity. My dear, dear husband, if I could feel sure that you would be amongst those who would thus turn to Him now, I should pass away with a sweeter sense of trust and

hope—a brighter confidence in that most blessed meeting on the other shore.”

The white head of the husband was bowed upon the pillow. He did not weep—the fountain of his tears lay too deep for him to find relief thus—but a few deep breaths, like gasps, bespoke the intensity of his emotion, and when he could articulate, he answered briefly—

“My life, I will try—I will try—so help me God!”

“He will help you, my precious husband,” she answered, with quivering tenderness of intonation, “and you know the promise that cannot fail, ‘All things are possible to him that believeth.’”

And then from that bowed head there came the earnest cry—

“‘Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.’”

After that followed a pause of deep silence. The Duchess, exhausted but content, lay back on her pillow with closed eyes. The Duke held her hand between his, and fought out his battle in silence and alone. He was passing through deeper waters than the dying woman; for her peace was made, and she was going confidently forth to meet Him who had bidden her to come; whilst he was fighting in doubt and helplessness the tempestuous winds and waves, feeling every moment that they must engulf him. And yet never had the two loving hearts beat more in sympathy and unison. Those moments were unspeakably precious to both, although no word passed between them.

The silence was scarcely broken as the door opened softly, and Bride stole back to her mother’s side. She had been caught by her old nurse meantime, and had been dosed with soup and wine, while some of the dishevelment of her dress and hair had been removed. Her aching eyes had been bathed, and she looked altogether strengthened and refreshed. The dying eyes turned upon her took in this, and the Duchess smiled with

a sense of relief to think that there was one faithful woman beneath the castle roof who would make Bride her first care.

The girl's eyes sought her mother's face with wistful intensity of gaze, and at once noted a change that even that brief half hour had brought with it. The shadow had deepened; there was a dimness coming over the bright eyes, the hand she touched was icy cold.

"Mother!—mother!—mother!" she cried, and sank down on her knees beside the bed.

"My child, my little Bride. You have been a dear, dear child to me. In days to come, if you live to have children of your own, may you be rewarded for all the tenderness you have shown to me."

"Mother, mother, let me die too! I cannot bear it! I cannot live without you!"

"Dearest, you must live for your father; you must comfort each other," and with a last effort of strength, the dying woman brought the hands of father and daughter together across her emaciated form, and held them locked together so in her stiffening fingers.

When the end came they neither knew exactly. Bride was on her knees, her face hidden, the shadow seeming to weigh her down till all was blackness round her, and she felt sinking, sinking, sinking down into some unknown abyss, clinging frantically to something which she took to be her mother's hand. The Duke, with his eyes upon his wife's face, saw the fluttering of the eyelids, heard a soft sigh, and then watched the settling down upon that wan face of a look of unspeakable rest and sweetness.

If that was death, why need death be dreaded? It was like nothing that he had seen or imagined before. The only words which came into his mind were those of a familiar formula never understood before—

"The peace of God that passeth all understanding."



CHAPTER III

THE HOUSE OF MOURNING

EUSTACE MARCHMONT came in sight of Penarvon Castle just as the last rays of the winter sunset were striking upon its closed windows and turning them into squares of flashing red light dazzling to the eye. The castle stood commandingly upon its lofty promontory of jagged cliff, and from its garden walls, as the young man remembered well, the spectator could look sheer down a deep precipice into the tossing waves of the sea beneath. He remembered the long side terrace of the castle, against which the thunder of the surf in winter months made a perpetual roar and battle; whilst even on summer evenings, when the sea lay like a sheet of molten gold beneath them, the ceaseless murmur was always to be heard, suggestive of the restless life of the ocean. It was natural perhaps that Eustace should draw rein and look at the majestic pile with something of pride in his gaze, for he was the Duke's next of kin, and in the course of nature would one day be master here. Yet there was no exultation in the steady gaze he fixed upon his future home: it was speculative and thoughtful rather than triumphant. There was a shade of perplexity in the wide-open grey eyes intently fixed upon the place, which looked at the moment as though lit up for illumination, and the firm lips set themselves in lines that were almost grim.

Eustace Marchmont was clad in a suit of black, which was evidently quite new, although slightly stained and disordered by the evidences of a long and hasty journey. He had, in fact, ridden hard from town ever since the news of the Duchess's death reached him, now three days ago. He knew that propriety demanded he should be present at her funeral, even without the invitation from the Duke. He had come as fast as post-horses could bring him, with his two servants in attendance, and had travelled without mischance.

It was many years now since Eustace had visited Penarvon. His father (dead two years since) and the Duke were cousins, and the Duke had no brother. As young men there had been some attachment between them, but they had grown apart with the advance of years. The Duke was by many years the elder of the two; and perhaps on account of seniority, perhaps from his position as head of the family, had striven with possibly unwise persistence to mould his cousin after his own wishes. Disagreement had ended in coolness, and the intercourse had become slacker. Although Eustace had visited his "uncle's" house (he had been taught so to speak of the Duke), he did not remember ever having seen his father there, and since his own boyhood he had not seen the place himself.

He had not understood at the time why his visits ceased, but he knew it well enough now. Although the Duke long cherished hopes of a son of his own to succeed him, he had always regarded Eustace as a possible heir, and had desired to have a voice in his education. The boy had been sent to Eton at his suggestion; but when his school-days were ended, and his uncle naturally supposed that the University would be the next step in his training, Mr. Marchmont had suddenly decided to travel abroad with the boy and see the world—the close of the long war having just rendered travelling possible with safety.

When he himself returned to England at the end of two years, it was with the news that Eustace had been left behind in Germany to finish his education there ; and the indignant remonstrances of the Duke had resulted in a coolness which had never been altogether conquered. He considered that the young man would be rendered entirely unfit by such training, for the position every year seemed to make it more probable he would one day hold, whilst Mr. Marchmont argued that, the youth's heart being set upon it, it was far better to give him his own way than try to force him into paths uncongenial and distasteful.

Eustace was now seven-and-twenty, and in command of an ample fortune. Both his parents were dead—his mother he did not even remember, and he had neither brother nor sister. His second cousin, Lady Bride Marchmont, whom he dimly remembered as a shrinking little girl, for ever clinging to her mother's hand, was the only relative of his own generation that he possessed ; and it had naturally occurred to him before now that to marry the Duke's daughter, if he could learn to love her and teach her to love him, would be the best reparation he could make to her for the lack of brothers of her own. It seemed to him a hard and unjust thing that her sex should disqualify her from succeeding to her father's wealth and title. Eustace was no lover of the time-honoured laws of primogeniture, entail, or the privileges of the upper classes. The leaven of the day was working strongly in him, and he was ready to break a lance in the cause of freedom and brotherly equality with whatever foe came in his way.

His face bespoke something of this temperament. He had the broad lofty brow of the thinker, the keen steady eye of the man of battle, the open sensitive nostril of the enthusiast, and the firm tender mouth of the philanthropist. Without being handsome he was attractive, and his face was worthy of study. There was something of quiet scorn lying latent in his expression, which argument easily called

into active existence. The face could darken sternly, or soften into ardent tenderness and enthusiasm, as the case might be. He had the air of a leader of men. His voice was deep, penetrating, and persuasive, and he had a fine command of language when his pulses were stirred. In person he was tall and commanding, and had that air of breeding which goes far to win respect with men of all classes. He moved with the quiet dignity and ease of one perfectly trained in all physical exercises, and in whom no thought of self-consciousness lurks. He looked well on horseback, riding with the grace of long practice. As he followed the windings of the zigzag road which led up to the castle, looking about him with keen eyes to observe what changes time had made in the old place, he looked like one whom the Duke might welcome with pride as his heir, since it had not pleased Providence to bestow upon him a son of his own.

He rode quietly up to the great sweep before the gateway and passed beneath it, answering the respectful salute of the porter with a friendly nod, and found himself in the quadrangle upon which the great hall door opened. His approach had been observed, and the servants in their sombre dress were waiting to receive him ; but the drawn blinds over all the windows, and the deep hush which pervaded the house, struck a chill upon the spirit of the young man as he passed beneath the portal, and a quick glance round the hall assured him that none but servants were there.

A great hound lying beside the roaring fire of logs rose with a suspicious bay and advanced towards him, but seeming to recognise kinship in the stranger, permitted him to stroke his head, as Eustace, standing beside the hearth, addressed the butler in low tones :—

“ How is it with his Grace ? ”

The man slowly shook his head.

“ Sadly, sir, but sadly. He keeps himself shut up in his

own room—the room next to that in which her Grace lies—and unless it be needful nobody disturbs him. He looks ten years older than he did a month back : it has made an old man of him in a few weeks.”

“ And the Lady Bride ? ”

“ She is bearing up wonderfully, but we think she has scarce realised her loss yet. She seems taken out of herself by it all—uplifted like—almost more than is natural in so young a lady. But she was always half a saint, like her Grace herself. She will be just such another as her mother.”

“ And the funeral is to-morrow ? ”

“ Yes, sir—on the first day of the new year. Her Grace died very early upon the morning of Christmas Day—just a week from now.”

Eustace was silent for a few minutes, and then turning to the servant, said—

“ Does his Grace know I am here ? Shall I see him to-day ? Does he see anybody ? ”

“ If you will let me show you your rooms, sir, I will let him know you have arrived. He will probably see you at dinner-time. He and Lady Bride dine together at five—their other meals they have hitherto taken in their own rooms, but that may be changed now. You will join them at dinner, of course, sir.”

“ If they wish it, certainly,” answered Eustace ; “ but I have no wish to intrude if they would prefer to be alone. Is anybody else here ? ”

“ There is nobody else to come, sir. Her Grace’s few relatives are in Ireland, and there has not been time to send for them, and they were not nearly related to her either. I am glad you are here, sir. It is a long time since Penarvon has seen you.”

“ Yes, I have been much abroad, but the place looks exactly the same. I could believe I had been here only yesterday.”

And then Eustace followed the man up the grand marble staircase and down a long corridor, so richly carpeted that their foot-falls made no sound, till they reached a small suite of apartments, three in number, which had been prepared for the use of the guest, and which were already bright with glowing fires, and numbers of wax candles in silver sconces arranged along the walls.

The costliness and richness of his surroundings was strange to Eustace, for although wealth was his, his habits were very simple, and he neither desired nor appreciated personal indulgences of whatever kind they might be. He looked round him now with a smile not entirely free from contempt, although he recognised in the welcome thus accorded him a spirit of friendly regard, which was pleasant.

"Unless, indeed, it is all the work of hired servants," he said, after a moment's cogitation. "Probably it is so—who else would have thought to spare for a guest at such a time as this? This is the regular thing at the castle for every visitor. There is nothing personal to me in all this warmth and brightness."

His baggage had arrived, and his servant had laid out his evening dress: but Eustace never required personal attention, and the man had already taken his departure. The young man donned his new suit of decorous black with rapidity and precision. He was no dandy, but he was no sloven either, and always looked well in his clothes. After his rapid toilet was completed, he sat down beside the fire to muse, and was only interrupted by the message to the effect that his Grace desired the pleasure of his company at the dinner-table that evening.

This being the case, and the hands of the clock on the mantelpiece pointing ten minutes only to the hour of five, Eustace at once rose and descended to the drawing-room, the door of which was thrown open for him by one of the footmen carrying in some logs to feed the huge fire. One

glance round the once familiar apartment showed him that it was empty. It was the smallest of the three drawing-rooms, opening one into the other in a long suite, and formed indeed the ante-chamber to the larger ones beyond; but it was the one chiefly used when there were no guests at the castle; and Eustace remembered well the pictures on the white and gold walls, the amber draperies, and the cabinets with their treasures of silver, china, and glass.

Nothing seemed changed about the place, and the sense of stationary immutability and repose struck strangely upon the alert faculties of the young man, whose life had always been full of variety—not only of place and scene, but of thought and principle. A dreamlike feeling came over him as he stood looking about him, and he did not know whether the predominant sensation in his mind were of satisfaction or impatience.

The door slowly opened, and in came a slim black-robed figure. For a moment Eustace, standing near to an interesting picture, and shadowed by a curtain, passed unnoticed, so that he took in the details of this living picture before he himself was seen. He knew in a moment who it was—his cousin Bride—the little timid girl of his boyish recollections; but if all else were unchanged at Penarvon, there was change at least here, for had he seen her in any other surroundings he would never have known or recognised her.

Bride's face was very pale, and there were dark violet shadows beneath the eyes which told of vigil and of weeping; yet the face was now not only calm, but full of a deep spiritual tranquillity and exaltation, which gave to it an aspect almost unearthly in its beauty. Bride had inherited all her mother's exceptional loveliness of feature, but she owed more to that expression—caught from, rather than transmitted by, that saintly mother—which struck the beholder far more than mere delicacy of feature

or purity of colouring. Eustace was no mean student of art, and had studied at the shrine of the old masters with an enthusiasm born of true appreciation for genius; yet never had he beheld, even in the greatest masterpieces, such a wonderfully spiritualised and glorified face as he now beheld in the person of his cousin Bride. A wave of unwonted devotional fervour came suddenly upon him. He felt that he could have bent the knee before her and kissed the hem of her garment; but instead of that he was constrained by custom to walk forward with outstretched hand, meeting the startled glance of her liquid dark eyes as she found herself not alone.

"You are my cousin Eustace," she said, in a low melodious voice that thrilled him strangely as it fell upon his ear; "my father will be glad you are come."

For once Eustace's readiness failed him. He held Bride's hand, and knew not how to address her. His heart was beating with quick strong throbs. He felt as though he were addressing some being from another sphere. What could he say to her at such a moment?

Perhaps his silence surprised her, for she raised her soft eyes again to his, and the glance went home to his soul like a sword-thrust, so that he quivered all over. But he found his voice at last.

"Forgive me," he said, and his voice was soft and even tremulous. "If I am silent, it is because I have no words in which to express what I wish. There are moments in life when we feel that words are no true medium of thought. I remember your mother, Bride—that is all I can find to say. I remember her—and before the thought of your great loss I am dumb. Silence is sometimes more eloquent than any speech can be."

He still held her hand. She raised her eyes to his, and he saw that he had touched her heart, for they were swimming now in bright tears, but her sweet mouth did not quiver.

"Thank you," she said, in tones that were little raised above a whisper. "I am glad you have said that. I am glad you remember her. I think she was fond of you, Eustace."

Then the door opened and the Duke appeared.

Eustace was shocked at his aspect. He remembered him as a very upright, dignified, majestic man, whose words were few and to the point, whose personality inspired awe and reverence in all about him, whose wishes were law, and whose will none ventured to dispute. He beheld before him now a bowed, white-headed man, out of whose eyes the light and keenness had passed, whose voice was low and enfeebled, and whose whole aspect betokened a mind and heart broken by grief, and a physique shattered by the blow which had desolated his home.

Nevertheless this form of grief did not appear to the young man so pathetic as Bride's, and he was not tongue-tied before the Duke. His well-chosen words of sympathy and condolence were received kindly by the old man, and before the first dinner was over Eustace felt that the ice was broken, and that he began to have some slight knowledge of the relatives with whom he felt he should in the future have considerable dealings if he succeeded in winning their favour. Their loneliness, isolation, and weakness appealed to the manly instincts of his nature, and he resolved that any service he could perform to lighten their burden should not be lacking.

When left alone with the Duke after Bride had vanished, little passed between them. The host apologised for his silence, but said he could not yet begin to talk of common things, and contented himself by obtaining a promise from Eustace to remain some weeks at the castle as his guest. In those days visits were always of considerable length, and Eustace had made his preparations for a lengthened absence from London, in case he should be required here. He accepted the invitation readily, and the Duke, rising

and saying good night, with an intimation that he should retire at once to his room, Eustace strolled across the vast hall to the drawing-room, half expecting to find it empty; but his heart gave a quick bound as he saw it tenanted by the slim black-robed figure, and met the earnest gaze of Bride's soft eyes.

She rose as he appeared, and advanced to meet him. Upon her face was an expression which he did not understand till her next words explained it.

"Would you like to come and see her for the last time? To-morrow it will be too late."

Eustace bent his head in voiceless assent. He could not say nay to such an invitation, albeit he thought that there was something morbid in the feeling which prompted it. Habituated to foreign ways and customs, this keeping of the dead unburied for so many days was in his eyes slightly repulsive; but he followed the noiseless steps of his guide, and was at last ushered into a large dim room, lighted by many wax tapers, the light of which seemed, however, absorbed into the heavy black draperies with which the walls were hung.

In this sombre apartment the Duchess had lain in state (if such a phrase might be used) for many days. The whole population of St. Bride and St. Erme had combined to plead for a last look upon her who in life had been so greatly beloved; and both the Duke and his daughter had been touched by the request, which was promptly gratified.

And so Eustace now found himself before a prostrate figure that bore the likeness of a marble effigy, but was clad in soft white robes of sheeny texture, the fine dark hair being dressed as in life, and crowned by the film of priceless lace which the Duchess was wont to wear. Tall lilies in pots made a background for the recumbent figure, and the wax tapers cast their light most fully upon the tranquil face of the dead. And when once the eye rested

on that face, the accessories were all forgotten. Eustace looked, and a great awe and wonder fell upon him. Bride looked, and her face kindled with that expression which he marked upon it when first he had seen her, and which afterwards, when he heard the words, seemed to him best described in this phrase, "Death is swallowed up of victory."

She knelt down beside the couch on which all that was mortal of her mother lay, and when Eustace turned his eyes away from the peaceful face of the dead, it was to let them rest for a moment upon the ecstatic countenance of the living.

But after one glance he softly retired, unnoticed by Bride, and shut the door behind him noiselessly.

In the shelter of his own room the sense of mystic awe and wonder that possessed him fell away by degrees. He paced up and down, lost in thought, and presently a frown clouded the eyes that had been till now full of pity and sympathy.

"She looks as though she had been living with the dead till she is more spirit than flesh. How can they let her? It is enough to kill her or send her mad! Well, thank heaven, the funeral is to-morrow. After that this sort of thing must cease. Poor child, poor girl! A father who seems to have no knowledge of her existence, her mother snatched away in middle life. And she does not look made of the stuff that forgets either. She will have a hard time of it in the days to come. I wonder if she will let me help her, if I can in any wise comfort her. That must be a heart worth winning, if one had but the key."

Upon the forenoon of the next day the funeral of the Duchess was celebrated with all the pomp and sombre show incident to such occasions in the days of which we write. Bride did not accompany the sable procession as it left the castle and wound down the hill. Women did not appear in public on such occasions then; and she only

watched from a turret window the mournful cortège as it set forth, the servants of the household forming in rank behind the coaches, and walking in procession in the rear, and as the gates were reached, being followed in turn by almost every man, woman, and child within a radius of five miles, the whole making such a procession as had never been seen in the place before.

Hitherto the girl had been supported by the feeling that her mother, although dead, was still with her; that she could gaze on that dear face at will, feel the shadowing presence of her great love, and know something of the hallowing brooding peace which rested upon the quiet face of the dead. Moreover, she was upheld all these days by a wild visionary hope that perhaps even yet her mother would be restored to her. Her intense faith in the power of God made it easy to her to imagine that in answer to her fervent prayer the soul might be restored to its tenement—the dead raised up to life. If the prayer of faith could move mountains—if *all* things were possible to him that believeth, why might not she believe that her own faith, her own prayer, might be answered after this manner? Had not men been given back from the dead before now? Why not this precious life, so bound up in her own and in the hearts of so many?

Thus the girl had argued, and thus she had spent her days and her nights in fasting and prayer, raised up above the level of earth by her absorbing hope and faith, till she had almost grown to believe that the desired miracle would become a reality. And now that the dream was ended, now that she stood watching the disappearance of that long procession, and knew that God had not answered her prayers, had not rewarded her faith as she felt it deserved to be rewarded, a strange leaden heaviness fell upon her spirit. The reaction from the ecstatic fervour of spirit set in with somewhat merciless force. She felt that the earth was iron and the heavens

brass, that there was none below to love her, none above to hear her. A sense akin to terror suddenly possessed her. She turned from her post of observation and fled downwards. She felt choking, and craved the fresh salt air, which had not kissed her cheek for more than this eternity of a week. At the foot of the turret was a door opening into the garden. She fled down, and found herself in the open air, and with hasty steps she passed through the deserted gardens till she came to the great glass conservatory, which had been erected at no small cost for the winter resort of the Duchess since she became so much the invalid; and flinging herself down upon the couch which still stood in its accustomed place in the recess made for it, the girl burst into wild weeping, and beat her head against the cushions in a frenzy akin to despair.

How long she thus remained she knew not. Darkness seemed to fall upon her, and a great horror of she knew not what. The next sensation of which she was really conscious was the touch of a hand on her shoulder, and the sound of a kindly and familiar voice in her ear—

“Lady Bride, ladybird, don’tee take on so bitterly, my lamb. It is not *her* they have put underground. May be *she* is near yu now whilst you weep. May be it was she who put it into my heart to come here just at this time. If they can grieve whom the peace of God Almighty has wrapped round, I think ’twould grieve her to see yu breaking your heart to-day.”

“O Abner!” cried the girl, sitting up and pushing the heavy hair out of her eyes, “I am glad you have come! I felt as though there was no one left in the wide world but me—that I was all alone, and all the world was dead. But I have not been like this before. Till they took her away I felt I had her with me. I knew that she was near—that she was watching over me. There was always the hope that she was not dead—that her spirit might come

back once more. O Abner, Abner! why does God always take those who can least be spared? There are so many who would scarce be missed, and she——”

Bride could not complete her sentence, and the old gardener looked tenderly at her. He had known her from her birth. He had guided her tottering steps round the garden before she could fairly walk alone. He had watched her growth and development with an almost fatherly tenderness and pride. She was as dear to him as though she had been his own flesh and blood; and the mother who was now taken away had never interfered with the friendship between the child and the old servant; nay, she had many and many a time held long talks herself with Abner, and knew how strong a sympathy there was between his views and her own, despite their widely different walk in life. And so in the old gardener Bride had a friend to whom at such a moment as this she could talk more freely than to any other living creature.

“May be the Lord wants the most beautiful flowers for His own garden, my Ladybird,” answered the old man, using the familiar pet name which had grown up between them in childhood. “When I used to gather flowers for her Grace’s room, I chose the sweetest and most perfect blossoms I could find. We mustn’t wonder if the Lord sometimes does the same—nor grudge Him the fairest and purest flowers, even though the loss is ours.”

Slightly soothed by the thought, Bride tried to smile.

“Only it seems as though we wanted them so much more,” said she.

“I don’t know. The dear Lord must have loved her full as much as we do. He lent her to us for many years; may be He knew she would be better placed in His garden now, where no pruning-knife need ever touch her, and no suns can scorch her, and where her leaves will never wither. Sure, my Ladybird, yu du not grudge her her place in God’s garden of Paradise?”

"O Abner! I will try not. I know what you mean; she did have much suffering to bear here, and I am thankful she will have no more. But there are some things so hard to understand, even when we believe them. I cannot bear to think of her body lying in the cold ground, and becoming—oh! it does not bear thinking of."

"Then, why think of it, Ladybird?—why not look beyond this poor corruptible body, and think of the glorious resurrection body with which we shall all arise?"

"Oh, it is so hard to understand!" cried Bride, pressing her hands together—"it is so hard to understand!"

"I think it is not possible to understand," said the old man quietly, "but surely it is easy to believe, for we see it every day and every year."

"How do we see it?" asked Bride, almost listlessly.

Abner put his hand in his pocket and drew forth a little packet of seed, some of which he poured into his palm.

"Lady Bride," he said in his grave meditative way, "it does not seem wonderful to yu that each of these tiny seeds will, after it has rotted in the ground, germinate and bear leaves and flowers and fruit. But if yu did not know it from constant seeing it year by year, if it was a strange thing that yu have been told, and yu would not believe it, and yu said to me, 'No, Abner, that cannot be. It is not sense. It cannot be understood. I must prove it first before I believe it.' And suppose yu took that seed and put it under that glass which clever men use for discoveries, and suppose beneath that powerful glass yu pulled it bit by bit to pieces to see if it contained the germ of the mystery, du yu think yu would find it there? Du yu think your seed would grow after being treated so?"

"No, of course not," answered Bride.

"Well, isn't it just so with the mysteries of God? He

gives them to us, and says, 'Here is your body. It is corruptible and mortal; but it has within it the germ of immortality, and though it will die and perish in the ground, yet it will rise again glorified when the day of resurrection comes.' But men in these days take that mystery and say, 'We will not take God's word for it; we will put it beneath the glass of our great intellects, and examine and see if it be true, and if we may not prove it by examination, then we will not believe it!' And so they set to work, and when they have done, they tell men not to believe God any longer, because they have proved Him a liar by the gauge of their own intellects. Du yu think these men would believe that this seed would sprout into a flower if they did not see it do so with their own eyes? No; they would laugh yu to scorn for telling them so. And so they laugh us to scorn who tell them that there will be a resurrection of the dead. But, Ladybird, never let your heart fail you. Never let doubt steal over your mind. What God has promised we know He will surely accomplish—and His words cannot fail."

She rose with a faint smile and held out her hand, which the old gardener took reverently and tenderly between both of his own.

"I will try to think of that if ever I doubt again," she said softly. "I do know—I do believe—but sometimes it is very hard to keep fast hold on the faith."





CHAPTER IV

THE DUKE'S HEIR

YOUR name is Tresithny, is it not?—and you are the gardener here, by what I understand, and have lived at Penarvon all your life. Is that so?”

“Yes, sir. My father was gardener to the old Duke, and he brought me up to take his place; and I’ve been working on the place here, man and boy, these fifty years. I was only a lad of eight when first I used to help my father with some of the lighter tasks, and now I have all the men on the place working under my orders. It is a long while since you paid us a visit, sir; but I remember you well as a little fellow when you came to Penarvon.”

“I’m afraid I don’t remember you. Boys are selfish little brats, and go about thinking of nothing but their own amusement. But, Tresithny, I have come to you now for information. They tell me you are a thoughtful man, and have educated yourself soundly in your leisure hours. One can almost see as much by looking at you and hearing you speak. I feel as though you are the man I want to get hold of. I have been here nearly a month now, and I have not been idle meantime: I have come here with an object, and I have been collecting information as far as I have been able to do so alone; but

I believe you will be able to help me better than I can help myself."

The gardener raised his head, and looked at the young gentleman before him with thoughtful mien. Although this was the first time he had been addressed by Eustace, he had seen him often pacing the garden paths in meditative abstraction, and had heard of him from others as walking or riding over the country roads, and asking strange questions of those he encountered in his rambles. He had been down amongst the fisher-folk of the bay. He had been up amongst the downlands, talking with the shepherd-folk who dwelt in the scattered stone huts that were met with from time to time there. He had been seen at various farmsteads, making friends with their inhabitants, and people were beginning to ask in a puzzled way what he meant by it all, and to wonder at the nature of his questions, albeit the stolid rustic mind was not wont to disturb itself much by inquiry or speculation. When asked a question of the bearing of which he was doubtful, the peasant would generally scratch his head and look vacantly out before him; and again and again, when pressed by Eustace for an answer, would drawl out something like the following reply—

"Zure, thee'd better ask Maister Tresithny. He mid knaw. He du knaw a sight o' things more 'n we. 'E be a'most as gude as Passon tu talk tu. Thee'd best ask he."

And after some time Eustace had followed this counsel, and was now face to face with his uncle's servant, although in the first instance he had told himself that he would speak of these things to nobody at Penarvon itself.

"I'll be pleased and proud to help any one of your name and race, sir," answered Abner quietly, "so far as I may rightly do so. What can I do for you, sir? You have been main busy since you came here, by all I see and hear."

"You have heard of me, then?" questioned Eustace, with a smile. "People have talked of my comings and goings, have they?"

"Folks here mostly take notice of what goes on up to the castle," answered Abner, "and they say that the young master is wonderful little there, but out all day on his own business, which is what they cannot make out."

Eustace laughed pleasantly, and then his face grew grave again.

"I should be more at the castle if I could be of service to his Grace or Lady Bride; but there is a sorrow upon which a stranger may not intrude, and at present I can call myself little else. In time I trust I may win my way there; but during these first days I believe the truest kindness is to keep away from them for the greater part of my time. And I have my own object to pursue, which is one that may not be ignored; for it is a duty, and I am resolved to do it to the utmost of my power."

Abner nodded his head in grave approval.

"That is the way our duties should be tackled, sir. It is no good giving half our energies to them. We have our orders plain and simple—'What thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.'"

"Yes—just so," answered Eustace, with a quick glance at the man, whose hands were still at work amongst his pots, even whilst he talked. He was in the potting shed, pricking out a quantity of young seedlings; and although he gave intelligent heed to the words of the young gentleman before him, he continued his employment with scrupulous care and exactness. "By-the-bye, Tresithny," Eustace suddenly interpolated, "aren't you something of a preacher, by what they say? Don't you hold meetings in St. Bride's amongst the fisher-folk? I have heard something of it down amongst the people there."

"Well, sir," answered Abner, "it isn't so to say a

service ; but we've got men-folk down there as will not enter the doors of a church, do what you will ; and though they be good enough friends with the Rev. Tremodart when he comes down on the bit of a quay to chat with them, they won't go to church, and he's too wise, may be, to try and force them. But they'll sometimes come of a Sunday evening to Dan Denver's cottage, and listen whilst I read them a chapter and talk it over afterwards. Some days they don't seem to have much to say, and leaves it most to me, and then it du seem to them almost like a bit of a sermon. But that's not what I mean it to be. I want to get them to think and talk as well."

The young man's eyes suddenly flashed, and he took up the word with suppressed eagerness.

"Ah! Tresithny, that's just it! That's the very pith of the whole matter. You and I ought to be friends. We both want to rouse the people to think. If we could do that—how much could be achieved!"

"Ay, indeed it could, sir. There be times when it seems as though it would be as easy to get the brute beast of the field to think, as it is to rouse them up to do it. And yet they have all immortal souls, though they care no more what becomes of them than the beasts that perish. Think of it!—think of it!"

Eustace gave Abner a quick keen look of mingled sympathy and criticism. He saw that their minds were working on absolutely different lines, but was by no means sure that these lines might not be made to coincide by a little gentle diplomacy. He recognised at once in this upright and stalwart old gardener a man of considerable power and influence, who might be a valuable ally if won over to the cause. But he knew, too, that the limitations imposed upon his intellect by the manner of his life, and his opportunities of self-culture, might form a serious barrier between them,

so he resolved to feel his way cautiously before advocating openly any of those opinions of which he was apparently the pioneer in these parts.

"Ah!" he said, with a long-drawn breath, "that hopeless apathy towards everything ennobling and elevating comes from centuries of oppression and injustice. Whilst men are forced to live like beasts, they will grovel in the mire like beasts, and not even know that they are treated like beasts. But let them be raised out of their helpless misery and grinding poverty, and their minds will grow healthy with their bodies. The state into which the people of this land have fallen is a disgrace to humanity; and all men of principle must stand shoulder to shoulder together to strive to raise and elevate them. It is a duty which in these days is crying aloud to Heaven, and to which thinking men in all countries are responding with more or less of zeal and energy. Things cannot go on as they have been doing. France has taught us a grim lesson of what will happen at last if we continue to tread down and oppress our humble brethren, as we have been doing all these long years and centuries!"

Eustace threw back his head, and the fire flashed from his eyes. His nature was always stirred to its depths by the thought of the wrongs of humanity. He had not found round and about Penarvon quite that amount of physical misery that he had heard described in other places; yet he had seen enough of the bovine apathy and stolid indifference of the rustics to rouse within him feelings of indignation and keen anger. He argued fiercely within himself that men were made into patient beasts of burden just to suit the selfish desires of the classes above them, who dreaded the day of reckoning which would follow any awakening on their part to a sense of their wrongs. The artisans of the Midlands and the North had partially awakened, and from all

sides was the cry going up—the cry for justice, for a hearing, for some one to expound their grievances and make a way out of them. Their helpless rage had hitherto been expended in the breaking of machinery, which they took to be their worst enemy, and in riots which had brought condign punishment upon them. Now they were being taken in hand by men of wealth and power, and were raising the cry of reform—crying aloud for representation in Parliament—agitating for a thing the nature of which they hardly understood, but which they were told would bring help and well-being in its wake. And men like Eustace Marchmont, with generous ardour all aflame in the cause which they held to be sacred and righteous, longed to see the spread of this feeling through the length and breadth of the land. The agricultural labourers were far more difficult to arouse than the artisan classes had been; but if the whole nation with one accord raised its voice aloud in a cry for justice, would not that cry prevail in spite of the whole weight and pressure brought to bear against it, and carry all before it in a triumphant series of long-needed reforms?

So Eustace argued in his hot and generous enthusiasm, and gently and cautiously did he strive to explain his views to Abner and win his sympathy for them. Here was a man who loved his fellows with a great and tender love—in that at least the two men were in accord—but whilst Abner thought almost exclusively of their immortal souls, Eustace's mind was entirely bent upon the improvement of their physical condition. He was by no means certain in his heart of hearts whether they possessed souls at all. As to everything connected with the spiritual world his mind was altogether a blank. There might or might not be a life to come; he could not profess any opinion of his own on such a point as that, but at least of this present life he was sure, and his religion, in as far as he

could be said to have one, was directed with perfect singleness of purpose towards the attainment of what he held to be the loftiest aim and object a man could have, namely, raising his fellow-men to a sense of their own responsibilities and rights, to ameliorate their condition, teach them self-restraint, self-culture, rational and intelligent happiness, to give them sunshine in their lives here, and a high code of moral ethics to live up to when they were able to receive it.

Something of all this did he strive to make plain to Abner as he sat beside him at his work. That he succeeded in winning the interest of his hearer was abundantly evident from the expression of the thoughtful intelligent face, and that the gardener understood a good deal of the questions of the day appeared from the nature of the questions and comments he made from time to time.

When Eustace had said his say there was silence for a while, and he waited with some eagerness to hear the effect produced upon the old man. He felt that Abner was a power in the place, and that a good deal of his own success might depend on how far he could get him to be a partisan in the good cause. Abner was slow to speak when his mind was not made up, and he was not one to reach a conclusion in a hurry. It was some time before he spoke, and then he said slowly and meditatively, "There's a deal of good in what you say, sir, and a deal more good in what you mean ; but yet for all that I can't quite see as you do. There's something in it all that's like putting the cart before the horse, to use a homely phrase, and that's not a thing as is found to answer when folks come to try it on."

"I don't think I quite take your meaning, Tresithny."

"No, sir? Well, I'll try to make it plainer like—that is, if you care to hear what an old man like me thinks, who has picked up his knowledge a bit

here and a bit there, and less from books than from men."

"I do care," answered Eustace, "and yours are the best methods of gaining instruction. You are a man of the people and a thinking man. I do value your opinion, and should like to have it."

"Well, sir, you shall. I am, as you truly say, a man of the people, and I think I may lay claim to understand my people as well as gentlefolks can do; and I'm very sure of one thing, that I'd be very sorry to live in a country where they were the rulers; for they haven't either the patience, or the knowledge, or the faculty of government; and things will go badly for England if the day comes when the voice of the people shall prevail as the voice of God."

"Ah! but the people have to be elevated and educated to be fit to rule," said Eustace. "They are not fit now, I admit, but we are to seek to raise them, body, soul, and spirit, and then a vastly different state of affairs will be brought about."

But Abner's face was very grave, and anything but acquiescent.

"Sir," he said, "I can't see that as you do. I've read a bit of history here and there, and I've seen too in my own lifetime something of what comes when the voice of the people prevails."

"It is not fair to charge upon the people the horrors of the French Revolution," interposed Eustace quickly. "The tyrants who provoked it were the people really to blame. They had made brutes and devils of the people, and they only reaped what they had sown."

"Very well, sir, I know in part at least you are right. We will say no more about history that may be open to such arguments as yours. But we always have our Bibles to go to when in doubt and perplexity, and we have it there in black and white that the powers that be are

ordained of God, that rulers and men of estate are to be revered, obeyed, and feared, that we are to submit ourselves to them as the ordinance of God."

"Yes, yes, Tresithny, in moderation; and if they do their duty on their side, that would be all right enough," answered Eustace, who began to feel that Abner was taking an unconsciously unfair advantage of him in adducing arguments drawn from Holy Writ, which had no value for him whatsoever. "But when kings and men of estate abuse their powers and become tyrannical and oppressive, then the compact on both sides is broken, and the people must stand up for themselves and their rights, or they will only fall into absolute slavery."

"Well, sir, I can't quite see that," answered Abner thoughtfully. "When St. Paul wrote by the power of the Holy Ghost about the reverence due to the great men and rulers of the earth, he was speaking in the main of heathen tyrants, of whom he stood in peril of his own life; but he still recognised them as the ordinance of God, as our Lord Himself did when He stood at the judgment-seat of Pilate. It isn't that I deny the wrongdoing of kings and nobles, but that I don't think you've got hold of the right way of making things better. I said it was like putting the cart before the horse, and that's just how it appears to me."

"But you have not explained how."

"Well, sir, that's soon done. My way of thinking is this. God meant first of all, in the early dispensations, to rule the world directly Himself, through His prophets and faithful servants; but the hardness and perverseness of man stood in His way, and so He gave them rulers and governors of their own to be their natural heads; and before the Christian dispensation had come, this was the ordered method, and He Himself gave it His sanction and blessing in many ways when He lived on earth: 'Render unto Cæsar the things that are

Cæsar's,' and so forth. Now, knowing that God has ordained kings and rulers, it seems plain to me that we should continue to give them reverence and honour; and if the world is going wrong through those evils which you speak of as abuses, that instead of the wise, and earnest, and good men (such as yourself, sir) coming to the people and trying to stir up in their hearts hatred and ill-will towards those above them—which your doctrine will and does do, sir, whether you mean it or not—you should go to the kings and the nobles. Why not strive to stir *them* up to do their duty by the people, to be just and merciful and liberal, to cease from oppression where it exists, and give them such things as are good for them to have by free and willing pleasure, instead of teaching the people to wring them from them little by little grudgingly and unwillingly? If men like you, sir, and those you have told me of, born to wealth and all that is great in the world, can feel for the wrongs and distresses of the poor of the land, surely others can be brought to do the same, the more so when they learn that mercy and liberality and justice are enjoined by God Himself. Then the people would learn to love and trust those above them, and would rejoice in their rulers as the Lord means them to; but teach them discontent and hatred and rebellion, and indeed, sir, I know not where it will end."

Eustace smiled with something of covert triumph.

"No; we do not know where it will end, save that it will end in the emancipation of the people from tyranny and oppression, which is what we aim for. That is the fear which holds men back from the good cause; but we are careless of that. Do what is right and leave the rest: that is our maxim. You who are such a theologian should know, Tresithny, that all things work together for good."

"To those who love the Lord, sir," answered Abner

quietly, and then there was silence for a moment between the men.

"Your plan is not bad in theory, Tresithny," broke out Eustace, after a pause, "but practically it is unworkable in these days. It would not accomplish our ends. We should not be listened to. We are not listened to. We are scouted and held in abhorrence of rulers."

"You might not be listened to all at once," said Abner, as the young man paused; "but neither will the people listen all at once. You say yourself it will take a generation, perhaps two or three, to accomplish what should be done. Suppose those generations were given to the other attempt—the striving to work upon the hearts of those in high places to study the needs of the land, and do justly by its humbler sons, might not there be hopes of a better result? I am but an unlettered man; I am scarce fit to dispute with you; but I think I know the nature of the classes you wish to see holding power, and I should not desire to be ruled by them."

"Well, well, we must agree to differ in some things, I see," said Eustace, rising with a smile, and holding out his hand in token of good-fellowship; "all this sounds strange and sudden to you. Men's minds have to grow into new ideas. But at least you love your people—in that we are agreed; and you would fain see them raised, and their condition improved, if it could be achieved. In that at least we agree. So we will part friends, and not oppose each other, even though we each see the shield on a different side."

Abner's smile was pleasant to see, and Eustace sauntered away, a little disappointed perhaps—for Abner's look of intellect had made him hope to win a disciple here—but pleased and interested in the man, and by no means despairing of winning him at last.

A few days later the Duke spoke to him upon a subject of keen interest to him. Both the Duke and his daughter

had kept themselves very much secluded since the funeral, as was rather the custom of the day, although in their case it was real broken-hearted sorrow which held them aloof from all the world at this juncture. But February came with sunshine and soft south winds, and the old nobleman began to resume his ordinary habits, and was pleased in his silent way to have a companion in Eustace. The young kinsman was sincerely attached to the head of his house, and his quick sympathies were aroused to real tenderness for him in his great sorrow. He had hitherto avoided any sort of speech that could possibly raise any irritation in the Duke's mind. Their talk had been of a subdued and quiet kind, so that nothing had arisen to disturb the harmony that existed between them.

Yet Eustace knew that he and his kinsman differed widely in thought and opinion, and that some day this divergence must appear in their talk. He meant to be very moderate and reasonable in all he might be forced to say, but to hide his views either from cowardice or motives of policy was a thing abhorrent to his nature, and could not be contemplated for a moment.

The first note of warning was struck one day when the pair were riding together across a stretch of bleak down. The Duke suddenly looked at his companion and asked—

“Do you ever think of standing for Parliament, Eustace?”

The young man flushed quickly.

“I have had some thoughts of it,” he answered with subdued eagerness, “but I do not know of any constituency that would accept me. I am almost a stranger to my country.”

“Ah! yes—that German education of yours was a great mistake—a great mistake,” said the Duke, with drawn brow; but after a few moments his face cleared and he drew rein, his companion following his example.

"But after all, you might manage it—it might be done. Do you see yonder heap of stones away there to the left? Well, that marks the site of an old manor belonging to us. That heap of stones returns a member to Parliament. *I* return the member, in point of fact, as you doubtless know. The old member now sitting is growing infirm and deaf: he feels the journeys backwards and forwards too much for him. I think it will not be long before he resigns. When he does so, the borough will fall vacant, and I can give it as I please. Then would come your chance, boy."

Eustace had flushed quickly; now he grew pale. The whole iniquity of this system of rotten boroughs was one of the flagrant abuses of the day, which he stood pledged to sweep away. Whilst growing and opulent cities like Manchester, Birmingham, and Sheffield had no representation of any kind, a heap of stones, a lonely field, a tiny group of hovels frequently returned a member to Parliament. Practically the House of Lords returned half the House of Commons, and the middle and lower classes were scarcely represented in any way.

Eager as Eustace was for a voice in the legislation of the future, he hesitated to think of gaining it in such a fashion.

"You are very good, uncle, he said"—he found it pleased the Duke to be so addressed. "But I am afraid I should hardly be a candidate to your mind. Times advance, and men's views change, and I suspect that mine and yours are scarcely in accord."

He had expected a sharp and almost scornful answer, and certainly a close and sifting examination; but nothing of the kind came, and looking into his kinsman's face, Eustace was surprised to see a strangely far-away and softened expression stealing over it.

"Times change!—ay, verily, they do—and men with them," he said, in a very gentle tone, "and we must

learn to be patient with new ways and not condemn them unheard. Boy, I am not fond of change. I have lived my life from day to day and year to year in quiet and peace, and I have not seen that good follows on the steps of those things that men call reform. But I am an old man now, and shall not be here much longer. What I think matters little, so that the right be done. Do not be afraid to speak to me freely. I will, at least, hear you patiently. I have learned that God's purposes may be fulfilling themselves when we can least see it. I may not agree, nor yet approve, but at least I can strive after patience."

Greatly surprised at a development altogether unexpected in the irascible old Duke, as he remembered him in the past, with his intolerance of anything but the strongest Tory statesmanship and the most conservative fashion of regarding everything, Eustace spoke with an answering moderation and sympathy, ignoring nothing that was wise and good in the old régime, but pointing out that the day for advance had come, and that the good of the country was at stake. He spoke well, for he had education and enthusiasm, and had thought for himself as well as having learned from others.

The Duke rode on very silently, only putting in a word here and there, but listening with close attention; and as they entered the courtyard, at last, still in earnest talk, he said—

"I do not agree with you, Eustace. I cannot see things as you do; but I will not go so far as to say you are altogether wrong. There may be two sides to the question, and we will talk more of it another time. I am sorry you take such pronounced views upon a side I hold to be in error, but you do so with pure motives and honest conviction. Youth is always ardent, and you are young. Perhaps in days to come you will

see that we are not altogether to blame for a state of things such as exists in the country to-day. I have lived longer than you have done in the world, boy; and I do not think you are going to rid the world of sin, misery, oppression, and degradation by your methods. If you have strength to carry them, you will work a silent and I trust a bloodless revolution; but you have an enemy to fight stronger than you think for. You may reduce the power of the Crown to a mere cipher. You may abolish privilege, prerogative, and a hundred other bugbears against which your ardent spirits are chafing. But when you have hurled them down from their places, do you think you will have contented the seething masses you are stirring up to ask for their 'rights?' Do you think crime, misery, vice, and degradation will be lessened? *I* think they will steadily increase, and that you will find yourselves, you reformers, fifty years hence, face to face with problems in comparison with which these before you now are but molehills to mountains. But go your way, go your way. Only experience can teach you your lesson; and that is the dearest master you can have—and generally teaches his lessons just a generation too late!"





CHAPTER V

MAN OF THE WORLD AND MYSTIC

THERE be no zarvice in the church to-day, my lady—not to St. Bride’s,” said a garden lad to Bride one bright Sunday morning in February as she was returning from a walk along the cliff in time for the eight-o’clock breakfast. Eustace had met her strolling homewards and had joined her. This had happened once or twice lately, and the strangeness of the feeling of having a companion was beginning to wear off.

“No service?” questioned the girl, pausing in her walk. “Is Mr. Tremodart ill? I had not heard of it.”

The lad scratched his head as he replied in the slow drawl of his native place—

“’Tisn’t ezactly that, my lady. Passon isn’t zick; but he du have one of his hens a settin’ in the pulpit, and zo he du not wish her distarbed.”

Eustace broke into a peal of laughter. It seemed a delicious notion to him that the service of the parish church was to be suspended because an erratic hen had chosen to sit herself in the sacred building. It chimed in with many notions he already held of the effeteness and deadness of the Church. He glanced into his companion’s face for an answering smile, but Bride was

looking straight before her with an expression in her liquid dark eyes which he was quite unable to fathom.

"You can go to hear Mr. St. Aubyn at St. Erme, George," she said kindly to the lad, after a moment's pause, but he only scratched his head again, and said—

"Mappen I'll go tu Dan's and year Maister Tresithny. They du zay as he'll read a bit out o' the book and tell folks what it all means."

"That will be better than getting into mischief," said the lady, with a grave though kindly look at the lad; and then she passed onwards to the house, Eustace walking beside her, smiling still.

"Are the services of the Church often suspended here for such weighty reasons?" he asked.

"Not often," answered Bride, still in the same gravely quiet way; "but Mr. Tremodart is hardly alive to the sacredness of his calling nor the sanctity of his office. He is a kind man, but he does not win souls by his teaching. The church is very badly attended: no doubt he thinks one service more or less of small importance. The people, I believe, like him all the better for giving them an occasional holiday from attendance, even though they may be very irregular in coming."

"I should think that highly probable," answered Eustace, still examining Bride's face with some curiosity, as if anxious to gauge her thoughts on this subject and to seek to find in them some accord with his own. "My experiences of the services at St. Bride's Church are not very stirring. The smell of dry-rot suggests the idea that it has been caught from the calibre of the discourses heard there. Our friend Mr. Tremodart may have many virtues, but he has not the gift of eloquence."

Bride made no response. In her eyes there was a look akin to pain, as though she felt the truth of the stricture, and yet it went against her to admit its truth.

Eustace waited for a moment and then continued in the same light way—

“And will the service of the parish church be suspended for three Sundays?—for, if my boyish recollections serve me, that is the time required by a hen for bringing off her brood.”

“Oh, no,” answered Bride, with a quick earnestness and energy, “that will certainly not be. Poor Mr. Tremodart, he knows no better perhaps; but it is very, very sad. I suppose it was only found out last night or this morning. There was no sermon last Sunday, so I suppose the eggs collecting in the pulpit were not noticed. Of course they should have been taken away at once. But Mr. Tremodart is very fond of his animals, and he does not think of sacred things quite as—as—others do. Of course it will be done before next Sunday. Oh, I am sorry it has happened. I am sorry for the poor people.”

Eustace could not understand her mood. He saw only the humorous side of the incident, but he would not say so to her. He was very anxious to approach nearer in thought and feeling to his beautiful cousin, who was as yet almost as much of a stranger to him as she had been upon the day of his arrival. Although he saw her daily, sat at table with her, and sometimes spent an hour over the piano with her in the evening (for both were good musicians, as things went in those days), he still felt as though she were a thing apart from him, wrapped in a world of her own of which he knew nothing. The barrier which divided them was at once impenetrable and invisible, yet he had never succeeded in discovering wherein its power lay, and what might be done to break it down and bring them together.

“You will go to St. Erme’s Church to-day, I suppose?” he said next, without trying to solve the problem suggested by her speech. “I have never attended St. Erme for a service, although I have met Mr. St. Aubyn. Will you

let me be your escort there? I suppose your father will hardly walk as far."

"No, I think not. He seldom goes out when there is no service at St. Bride. He does not care for Mr. St. Aubyn's preaching as I do: he prefers that of Mr. Tremodart."

Eustace secretly thought it must be a queer sort of preaching that could be inferior to that of the parson of St. Bride's; but he made no remark, and merely asked—

"Then you will let me be your escort?"

"Thank you," answered Bride quietly; "if you wish to go, I think you will be rewarded."

Eustace felt that his reward would be in the pleasure of the walk to and fro with his cousin; but he did not say so, even though rather exaggerated and high-flown compliments were then the fashion of the day more than they have since become. Something in Bride's aspect and manner always withheld him from uttering words of that kind, and his own honesty and common-sense kept him at all times within bounds, so that he had never acquired the foolish foppery that was fashionable amongst the gilded youth of the aristocracy. In one thing at least he and Bride were agreed—that life was given for something more than mere idle amusement and pleasure-seeking. And when they started off together for their two miles' walk across cliff and down for the little church of St. Erme, Eustace began to ask questions of her as to the condition of the people, their ignorance, their poverty, their state of apathy and neglect, which all at once aroused her interest and sympathy, and caused her to open out towards him as she had never done before.

Bride loved the people—that was the first fact he gathered from the answers she made him. She loved them—and he loved them too. He was conscious that

they loved them with a difference—that when they spoke of raising them and making them better and happier, she was thinking of one thing and he of another. He was conscious of this, but he did not think she was; and he was very careful to say no word to check the impulse of confidence which had arisen between them. Bride was grieved for the state of things about her: she mourned over the degradation, the apathy, the almost bestial indifference to higher things that reigned amongst the humble folks about her home. She spoke with a glimmer as of tears in her eyes of their absolute indifference to all that was high and noble and true; of the deep superstitions, which stultified their spiritual aspirations, and the blind error and folly of those who, turning away from God, sought wisdom and help from those calling themselves witches—many of whom did possess, or appear to possess, occult powers that it was impossible altogether to explain away or disbelieve.

“Yes, Bride, it is very sad to hear of,” said Eustace gravely, “and it all points to the same thing. We must teach the people. We must raise them. We must feed them with wholesome food, and then they will turn away in disgust from these effete superstitions, which are only the outcome of ignorance and degraded minds.”

“I fear me there is something worse in them than that, Eustace,” said Bride, looking out before her with that luminous gaze he often noticed in her, which suggested a mind moving in a sphere above that of the common earth. “It is the work of something more than blind ignorance. It is the work of the devil himself. The powers many of these witches exert is something beyond what any mere trickery can account for. There is an agency beyond anything of that sort—it is the devil who endows these miserable beings with powers above those of their fellows. God have mercy on the souls of

such! For in an evil hour, and for the hope of worldly gain, they have placed their neck beneath an awful yoke, and God alone knows whether for such there can be pardon and restoration!"

Eustace listened in silent amazement. He knew that gross superstition reigned amongst the degraded and ignorant; but he had always believed that it was confined to them, and that those who had enjoyed the advantages of education were far above anything so credulous as a belief in a personal devil working through the medium of men. It was an age when materialism and rationalism in one form or another stalked triumphantly over the earth. Spirituality was at a low ebb; the Catholic revival was in its infancy. The wave of earnestness and spiritual light which had been awakened by Wesley had dwindled and spent itself, leaving many traces behind of piety and zeal, but without accomplishing that work of awakening its founders had hoped to do. The Court set a bad example; the people followed it more or less. It was an age of laxity both in morals and in thought; but the prevailing tone of ordinary men was one of condescending scepticism—tolerating religion, but believing that a new era was coming upon the world in which Christianity should be superseded by "natural religion"—a thing far purer and higher in the estimation of its devotees.

That the world was evil, and in the greatest need of reform, Eustace would be the last man to deny; but to refer the gross superstitions of a benighted peasantry to the direct agency of a personal devil savoured to his mind of utter childishness, although possibly it was not more logically untenable than a belief in a personal Saviour, from whom proceeded all holy impulses, all elevating and pardoning love, all earnest searchings after the higher life. But if he was equally sceptical on both of these points, he would fain have gauged the soul of

his companion, being keenly interested, not only in herself, but in every aspect of thought as it presented itself to minds of different calibre.

"You mean that you still believe in a certain devil-possession?" he asked tentatively; and Bride turned upon him one long inscrutable glance as she answered, after a long pause—

"Has the world ever been without devil-possession of one kind or another, varying infinitely in its forms, to blind and deceive those who dwell on the earth? What is sin at all but the work in men's hearts of the devil and his angels, ever prompting, deceiving, suggesting? But where ignorance is grossest, and the light of God shines least, there he finds the readiest victims to listen to his seducing whispers." She paused a moment, looked first at Eustace, with the earnestness that always perplexed and stimulated his curiosity, and then added, in a much lower tone, "And are we not to look for more and more indications of his powers, more manifestations of them in forms of every kind, in the days that are coming?"

"Why?" asked Eustace, in a tone as low as hers.

She clasped her hands lightly together as she made reply—

"Ah! because the days of the end are approaching—because the great day of Armageddon is coming upon us, and the armies of heaven and hell are mustering in battle-array for that awful final struggle which shall mark the end of this dispensation, in which the Antichrist shall be revealed—the man of sin, in whom the great apostasy shall be consummated, and whom the Lord shall finally destroy when He rides triumphant to do the final will of God, with the armies of heaven following Him on white horses. And will the devil be idle when he knows that his time is but short? Will he fail to send the strong delusion to blind men's eyes, and make them ready to hail

the Man of Sin when he shall arise? Men have thought that they saw him in the great conqueror whose power was broken but a few short years ago; but there is another and a greater to arise than he, and the devil is working now in the hearts of men to prepare them for his coming."

Eustace regarded her with keen interest and curiosity as she spoke. Her face had kindled in a wonderful way. In the liquid depths of her eyes there were strange lights shining. That she saw before her as in a picture all that she spoke of he could not doubt, nor yet that she hoped herself to be numbered in the armies of the Lord of Hosts when He went forth conquering and to conquer. He had never before met mysticism carried to such a point, and it stirred his pulses with quick thrills of wonderment and curiosity.

"But, Bride, I would understand more of this," he said very gently, so as not to rouse her from her trance of feeling. "How do you know that the days of the end are approaching so near? Why should not the world be, as many believe her to be, still in her infancy?"

"Because the voice of God has been awakened in the Church," answered Bride, in a low tense tone. "Because God has at last answered the prayers of those who, ever since those awful days of the uprising in France, have been sending up supplications to His throne to send us light and help from above. He has answered. He has shown us through holy men, who have been, with fasting and prayer, making study of the prophetic books of Scripture, so long sealed to man, what all this stirring and uprising of the nations portends; and He has told us that this is the beginning of those judgments of God, which in the last days He will pour out upon the earth, when the apostasy of the world and of the Church shall be avenged, and the Lord will purify the earth before He comes to reign there. We know, because the voice of the Lord has

spoken it. But the world will not hear His voice. The world will not listen; and the devil, for fear lest it should, sends false voices—messages from the dead—teaches men to inquire of spirits that peep and mutter, instead of inquiring to the living God; and so we see an awakening of the spirits of evil as well as of those of good; and so it will go on, each party growing stronger and stronger; though that of the evil one will have the seeming mastery, till the final struggle shall be consummated, and the enemies of God overthrown for ever.”

Eustace was saved the perplexity of trying to find an answer by the sudden approach of Mr. St. Aubyn (whose old-fashioned rectory house they were now passing) just as he turned out of his gate in the direction of the church. He greeted Bride and her companion cordially, made them promise to come to his house at the conclusion of the service and refresh themselves before their walk home, and then had them ushered into the rectory pew, which was always empty at this time of year, for his wife was a great invalid, and could only get out of doors in the most genial season of the year.

The little church of St. Erme was very antiquated, and interesting to archaeologists; but under Mr. St. Aubyn's care it had lost the air of neglect and desolation which was so common in rural churches. The congregation was good for the size of the place, and the service was reverently and intelligently conducted. The sermon was very simple, in accordance with the needs of the flock; but there was a vein of spirituality and piety running through it that struck Eustace as being unusual and original, and kept alive his interest in the views of “*pietists*,” as he classified them in his mind. He had been taught to regard every form of belief or unbelief as a portion of a classified system of speculation or philosophy; and he was glad to think he might have an opportunity of some conversation with Mr. St. Aubyn after the service, as he

had struck him on other occasions when they had met as being a man of intellect and wide reading.

The Rector himself escorted the guests to his house, and Bride went upstairs to see the invalid, who reminded her a little of her own mother, and whose presence always acted on her soothingly and gratefully.

She felt refreshed by the hour spent in that quiet room, refreshed in body and mind. She had had food given her to eat; and communion of thought with one who sympathised with her, even where their opinions might not be altogether in accord, was more to her in those days than any bodily sustenance could be. Since her mother's death Bride had been shut up entirely within herself, and it is not good for such an ardent soul as hers to be deprived of the natural outlet of speech with her fellow-man.

When the girl went downstairs again, she found the two men deep in talk, and sat quietly down in a shadowy corner to wait till they had finished. Mr. St. Aubyn observed her entrance, though Eustace, whose back was towards her, did not. The two were keenly interested in their discourse, and continued it with animation. Bride soon began to pick up the drift of it, and listened with wonder and amaze, a sense of indignation and sadness inextricably mixed together falling upon her as she realised what it all meant.

The two scholars were discussing the various phases of German rationalism which had arisen close on the heels of French and English deism; and from the tone taken by Eustace it was abundantly evident that he was deeply bitten by the philosophy of Wolff, by the destructive rationalism of Semler and Bretschneider, and the subjective philosophy of Kant and his followers, who evolve all things in heaven and earth from their own consciousness of them, on the principle that "*cogito, ergo sum.*"

He had been educated at Jena and Weimar, where this school of philosophy had its headquarters; and he was

deeply impregnated with the teaching of those who had followed upon the first bold propounders of its doctrines. The names of Descartes and Locke, Spinoza and Fichte, fell glibly from his tongue, as he ran through in a masterly way the methods of these great thinkers of the different centuries, and strove to show how, one after another, each in a different way had struggled to show a blinded world that there could be no religion that did not appeal to the reason; that the allegorical and the dogmatic methods of interpreting Scripture had been tried in the balances and found wanting, and that only the historic—the true rational interpretation—could be found lasting with thinking men.

It was with a smile, and with great courtesy and patience, that Mr. St. Aubyn listened to the clear and terse arguments of his intellectual guest; and then he asked him what he thought of the Berlin school of thought, which had trodden quickly upon the heels of the one he had been ardently advocating—asked him what had been the teaching of Schleiermacher and Neander and De Wette, and whether they had been able (whilst giving all due weight to the value of reason) to remain where the destructive rationalist thinkers had left them. Already they had begun to strive to reconstruct a living and personal Christ out of the ruins of the historic method, which would have robbed Him of all but a shadowy existence as a misguided though well-meaning fanatic, deceiving and deceived. How was it men could never rest without some theory of a Divine personality, call it by what name they would? Was it not the most rational deduction to admit that the reason for this inherent longing (which none of the world's greatest thinkers had ever attempted to deny) was that the subjective philosophy never can content the heart of man; that man *must* have an object of worship, an external standard, a living Head, and not an abstraction, simply because there *is* a living God,

who created him in His own image ; because he *has* been redeemed by a living and incarnate Saviour, and because the Spirit of the Eternal God the Father and the Son is for ever working in his heart, and seeking to bring it back to uniformity with the heart of Christ, overflowing with love towards God and towards man ?

That, in brief, was the argument on both sides, only argued out at length with skill and knowledge and versatility of thought by each combatant. Bride, in her dim corner, sat and listened, and sometimes shivered in horror, sometimes glowed with an ecstatic rapture, but always listened with undivided attention, for these matters were not to her the dry arguments of philosophers merely, but indications of the spirit of perversity and blindness at work in the world in the latter days—the spirit of the lawless one, coming in every insidious form ; first under the guise of liberality of thought and intellect, then teaching men to throw off from them all the fetters imposed by the precepts of Christ, all the external authority of the Church ; paving the way for that other rising against kings and rulers and external authority of any kind whatsoever which she had been warned was one of the signs of the latter days, when the voice of the people should prevail once again, and they should give the power to him who should come “in his own name.”

But the discussion ended at last as all such do, each man thinking as he did before, though glad of the opportunity of exchanging ideas with a scholar and person of intellectual acumen.

“We can at least agree to differ,” said Mr. St. Aubyn, as he shook hands warmly. “We can be friends, even though we have our private thoughts about each other’s folly. You are young yet. You have your tilt with the world before you. It is natural to your age and temperament to take nothing on trust, to examine all for yourself. Perhaps in the days to come you may learn the

lesson which other philosophers of your own school have done—that there is no living on systems and philosophies—that the hungry human heart of man must have more to feed on than husks. Well, there is the Bread of Life waiting for you when you are willing to receive it. I think the day will come when you will take it at the hands of the all-forgiving and all-loving Father.”

Eustace smiled, and pressed the hand he held. He was no bigot, and he had a vein of poetical imagination within him to which these words appealed. Besides, Bride was standing by, and he would not willingly have pained her. He did not know how much she had heard of the previous discussion, nor how much she would have understood if she had heard. He said his adieus cordially, hoped he and Mr. St. Aubyn would often meet, and gave his arm to his cousin to escort her home again.

He was sufficiently thoughtful himself that his silence did not strike him till they had walked some way; but when he did strive to speak on subjects which generally commanded her interest, he found her absolutely unresponsive.

He looked at her, and saw that her face was cold and tranquil in its statuesque beauty. The light which so often beamed in her eyes was extinguished now. She was very pale, and moved mechanically, and as though with something of an effort. He asked her if she were tired, but received a monosyllabic negative; and then he made one more effort to interest her by a theme which had never failed heretofore.

The ignorance of the peasantry was with her, as with him, a source of pain and dissatisfaction. She and her mother had been planning, before the death of the latter, how some small beginning might be made to get the children taught just such rudiments of knowledge as should raise them above the level of the beasts they tended. Hardly a single labourer or respectable working man in

country districts could either read or write. Sometimes a substantial farmer could do no more than set his name to a bill; and clever lads, who might have raised themselves in the world, were kept down and hampered all their lives by the inability to master the rudiments of education. Bride's grief was that none of the villagers and fisher-folks could read the Bible—that it must remain to them a sealed book, save when others expounded it to them. Eustace's objection to ignorance was very differently grounded; but hitherto the subject had been one of common interest, and when together they had taken pleasure in discussing Bride's favourite plan of erecting a small school in memory of her mother, where such men, women, and children as could find time and had the desire to learn might be taught by a qualified person, and gradually win for the place a higher standard of life and faith than was to be found in the surrounding villages.

But even this subject to-day did not rouse in the girl any spark of her wonted interest. She looked at him with steadfast sadness, as he spoke of what he meant to try to do in this matter in other places (he did not, from motives of delicacy, identify himself too much with St. Bride in talking to his cousin), and said very gently, but with a severity which was not altogether without intention—

“I am not sure that the people will not be better as they are, Eustace, than taught as you will be likely to teach them.”

The young man flushed quickly. Philosopher though he was, he was human, and this was a taunt he hardly cared to let pass.

“Do you mean to say that you think I should do them harm and not good by helping them out of their mists of darkness?” he asked, with slight incisiveness of manner.

"Do you think you *would* be helping them out of the mists of darkness?" asked the girl, suddenly turning her eyes upon him, with a look he could not fathom.

"Certainly," he answered quickly, and without hesitation.

Her face was turned away then. He only saw the pale pure profile outlined against the sky.

"I am afraid not," she answered, in a quiet serious way, that indicated sadness if not depression; "there are worse forms of darkness than intellectual darkness."

"Do you think so?" he answered, in a tone that implied absolute disagreement.

"I know it," she answered, without the smallest hesitation. "Intellectual darkness is sad, carried to the extent we see it here. But spiritual darkness is a thousand times sadder, and, oh! how much more difficult to enlighten!"

He said nothing. "Why try to argue with a fanatic?" he thought, and they took their homeward way in silence.

Bride left him at the castle door and went quietly up to her room. Eustace stood looking after her.

"You are very beautiful, my cousin," he said to himself, "and you fascinate me as no woman has fascinated me yet; but you are a mystic and a fanatic both—and both these are beings inexplicable to me—and yet I shall try to find you out, and teach you that there are nobler things a woman can be than you have dreamed of as yet."





CHAPTER VI

THE GOSPEL OF DISCONTENT

SAUL TRESITHNY was in a restless and disturbed frame of mind just now. He did not himself know what was creeping over him, but he had been for some time now experiencing a change of feeling,—a sense of weariness and disgust with his daily toil, with the people about him, with the world in general, that he had never felt before, and which perplexed him not a little.

A few weeks earlier, when this state had first assailed him, he believed it to be the outcome of his growing affection for Genefer, the farmer's daughter, and thought, if he could but assure himself that his affection was returned, he should be himself once more; but in this conjecture he had not proved right. Genefer had admitted her preference for him; they held stolen interviews at all manner of times in and about the farm; she took care that his material comforts were greater than they had ever been before, and he could (if he chose) look forward to settling in life at no very distant date with a wife and home of his own. And yet he was not happy—he was more restless and discontented than ever in his life before.

Was it the monotony of farm labour that was the cause

of this? Of course Saul and those about him had long known that he could do much better for himself if he wished. His grandfather had always told him that there was a home open to him in his comfortable cottage if he ever chose to avail himself of it, and that a wife of his would be warmly welcomed to make the home bright and cheerful for them both. He knew that the Duke would at any time give him employment in his stables, for Saul had a knack with horses that was well known all through the neighbourhood, and often caused him to be summoned to look at some refractory animal, and assist in the task of breaking him. Mr. St. Aubyn had more than once offered him the post of "odd man" at the rectory, where his one servant kept the flower garden and looked after the one stout cob which the Rector rode on his parish rounds, and had a comfortable little cottage at the gates for his home. But for some unexplained reason Saul had always declined these chances of bettering himself, and remained obstinately at his ill-paid farm work, greatly to the satisfaction of the farmer, who had never had so good an all-round man before, and who always treated Saul with consideration and affability, recognising qualities in him that he would have been loth to part with.

But perhaps no man of latent talent and energy is really content long together in a life that gives no scope for the exercise of his higher powers. Possibly it was merely this sense of constraint and uselessness which was at the bottom of Saul's inexplicable and little understood depression. However that may be, he had certainly taken to a mood of sullen brooding, which could hardly be dignified by the name of thought. He avoided his grandfather's cottage on Sunday, preferring to work off his oppression by taking long walks across the cliffs; often finding himself in the little town of Pentreath before he was ready for a halt; and it was in this place

that he first began to know and hear something of the questions of the day that were stirring in the great world around his humble home.

Newspapers never found their way to St. Bride's, save to the castle ; but Saul had formed the acquaintance of a cobbler in Pentreath, who was an ardent politician in his own way, and, with the natural and unexplained bias of his class, was a red-hot Radical to boot, and loved nothing so well as to inveigh with untrained and perfervid eloquence against the evils of the day—the oppression and misery of the poor, the tyranny and licentiousness, the cruelty and selfishness, of the rich. He prognosticated a day when there should be a general upheaval and turning of the tables, when every man should have his “rights,” and the tyrants of the earth should quake and tremble before their outraged slaves, as had been the case in France but a generation ago—the fearful story of which was well known to him, and over which he gloated with eager delight, even in its most ghastly details.

With this man we have no concern in these pages. He was one of that class of demagogues and agitators which was arising in England, and has flourished there to a greater or less extent ever since. Hundreds and thousands of these men were too obscure and too ignorant ever to make a name in the world, but they acted on the ignorant people about them as the leaven in the pan, and did much to bring about the state of general discontent and revolt which preceded the era of reform.

All through the month of January, when Saul would not spend his Sundays at the farm, on account of the visits of young Farmer Hewett, who was his especial aversion, he walked over to Pentreath and passed several hours with the cobbler, whose acquaintance he had made some time previously. At first the man's talk had small interest for him, but he had a natural thirst for information ; and great enthusiasm is like to kindle sparks in the

minds of others, even when at first there seems small sympathy between them. Almost in spite of himself, Saul began to feel interested in the monologues and diatribes of the bright-eyed little artisan, and whether or no he agreed in his conclusions, he did come to have some notion of the state of the country at this time, the abuses which reigned there in many quarters, and the general sense amongst the people that something had got to be done to remedy this state of affairs—or they would know the reason why!

Thus it came about that when Saul first came into contact with Eustace Marchmont, he was not in that state of blank ignorance which was the usual attribute of the rustic of those parts, but had been instructed, although in a one-sided and imperfect way, upon the grievances of his class, and had, at least, been aroused to a sense that the world was all wrong, whether or not he was to have a hand in the setting of it to rights.

Eustace had seen Saul once or twice before he attempted to speak with him. His fine presence always attracted attention, and in his case the strong likeness to Abner gave him another mark of interest for those who knew the elder man. Eustace would have tried to get speech with him before, being impressed by the intelligence and character of the face, but had been somewhat deterred from the fact that he heard Abner had had the bringing up of the boy, and if so, he felt he might not find there the sort of soil he wanted. He liked a talk with the gardener at any time he could get him to engage in conversation, but the two never agreed in their conclusions. Both fully admitted the evils of the day and the need for reformation, but how that reformation was to be effected they never could agree; and although they parted friends, and had a warm esteem one for the other, Eustace secretly wished that Tresithny either knew a little more or a little less, and

that his uncle did not possess a servant of such strong and peculiar views, and with so much influence in the place.

If Saul should prove to be a disciple of his grandfather's, Eustace felt that it would be time wasted to seek to win him to his own view of the situation; whilst, on the other hand, if he could gain the young man as a convert to the new gospel, such a recruit would be a great power in his hand; for no one could look into Saul's dark handsome face, and note the development of brow and head, without being certain that he possessed intelligence beyond the wont of his fellows, and force of character, which went farther in such a cause than keenness of wits.

But though Eustace often tried to get speech with the young man in a casual and incidental way, he never succeeded in doing so. He went to the farm from time to time and made himself pleasant to the farmer and his family. He walked about the place, and chatted as occasion served with the broad-faced, soft-spoken labourers, who grinned at any small sally he might make, and looked bland, though deferential, if he spoke of matters beyond their ken, as he had a way of doing tentatively, although with an object in view. He began to be talked of as a man with something in his head that was quite unfathomable. All agreed that he was an affable young gentleman, and well-spoken and friendly; but the rustics were shy of him nevertheless, and his chief friends were made amongst the bold and lawless fisher and smuggling folks down in the cluster of hovels beneath the shelter of the cliff. They were more or less at war with the law as it was—at least with the excise laws, which were the only ones about which they knew or cared a halfpenny; and it was easy to convince them that there was something rotten in the present system of administering the law generally, and that the people must combine to insist on a reformation. But even

whilst winning grunts and snorts of approval from these rough fellows, Eustace felt that his mind and theirs were really poles asunder, and that the lawlessness they looked upon as the embodiment of welfare and happiness was an altogether different thing from that beautiful justice, law, and order which he strove to believe was to come into the world when his doctrines had leavened and fermented and taken shape. Sometimes he was almost disheartened with his want of success, wondering whether this doctrine of discontent were a wise one to instil into the minds of these wild, fierce fisher-folk. Some of the conclusions they drew from his teaching startled him not a little, as when one of them remarked that, since the great folks were so tyrannical and wicked and selfish, it would be no more that right and a just judgment to lure them to their death by false lights some stormy night, that their goods might fall a prey to the suffering poor; and this savage suggestion was hailed with such enthusiasm that Eustace was sternly horrified, and spoke with terse eloquence against any such wickedness, only to find, as other teachers and orators have found before him, that though it was easy to convince men of the truth of a doctrine towards which they were predisposed, it was altogether another matter to hinder them from deductions altogether false, and foreign to the matter in hand, when these also were to their liking; and that they were far less patient in listening to words that opposed these deductions than they had been to those which suggested them.

It was after some such experiences as these that Eustace had left the fishermen and striven to win the friendship of the rustics, but had been met by the placid stolidity and uncomprehending ignorance which seemed to form almost as absolute a barrier between them as the lack of reason and speech in brute beasts. Indeed, they and their sheep and oxen seemed to understand

each other better than he and the labouring men upon the land. It was discouraging and uphill work from first to last; and the one man whom he really desired to gain, and felt certain possessed the stamp of mind and the intelligence he longed to meet, avoided him with a persistence which led him to the conclusion at last that Tresithny had warned his grandson to have no dealings with the gentleman from the castle.

But accident led at last to a meeting, and from that meeting dated the train of circumstances which led to a strange but lasting friendship between the two men whose walks in life lay so widely apart.

Eustace was out upon the downs riding a mettlesome young horse from the Duke's stable. He was a fearless horseman, but not an experienced one. During the years he had spent in travel and in Germany, horse exercise had not come much in his way, save as a means of locomotion, and then the animals ridden had not been of a fiery kind. He had a firm seat and a steady hand, but he was by no means familiar with the tricks of a flighty young mare, when the spring of the year sets the hot blood of all young things stirring joyously in their veins, and incites them to all sorts of vagaries and extravagant gambols. Eustace was possessed with the master-mind that must always gain the upper hand of any creature under his control; and perhaps he was a thought too stern in his desire after discipline; for in lieu of indulging the wild spirits of his steed with a healthy gallop over the short elastic turf, which might soon have reduced her to quietness and submission, he held her with a strong firm hand, resolved that he and he alone would decide the time when her limbs should be allowed to stretch themselves as they longed to do;—with the effect that the beautiful, high-spirited creature, fretted beyond the limits of endurance, commenced to buck-jump with such alarming persistence and velocity, that Eustace was

at last unseated, and measured his length ignominiously upon the short turf, whilst his horse, tossing her dainty head with a gesture of visible triumph, set off at a mad gallop straight across the green down, which she hardly seemed to touch with her feet.

Eustace was not hurt. He had kicked his feet free of the stirrups before he slipped off, and the ground was soft. The mare had avoided touching him with her feet as she sped off, and, save for the humiliation of the fall, and the fear lest the horse should be hurt, Eustace cared little for the accident. He could no longer see the flying steed. The ridge of swelling down hid her from him; but he picked himself up and wondered what he should do next, and whether the creature would find her way home or should be pursued, for she had not headed for her stable, but had gone tearing away over the green turf in a diagonal direction. Brushing the traces of his accident from his clothes, Eustace slowly mounted the low ridge, and then to his relief saw a horseman cantering towards him up the opposite side. A second glance told him that the horseman was none other than Saul Tresithny, and that he was mounted upon the runaway mare, whom he had evidently captured before she had had time to do herself a mischief.

Two minutes later Saul had come to a standstill beside him, and was on his own feet in a twinkling.

"I hope you are not hurt, sir," he said shortly.

"Not at all, thank you—only humiliated. I did not mean to let her have her own way, but she took it in spite of me. How did you manage to catch her? And how come you to be so good a rider? You manage her far better than I do."

"I broke her in, you see, sir," answered Saul, who was stroking the glossy foam-flecked neck of the beautiful creature, whilst she dropped her nose into his palm, and was evincing every sign of satisfaction in the meeting.

"His Grace bought her from Farmer Teazel. She was bred on these downs, and I had the breaking of her. She'll make a capital hunter one of these days; but it's not every rider she'll let mount her, nor yet keep mounted when once they've been on her back. She'll give you some trouble, I expect, sir, the next time you try to ride her. But Lady Bride can guide her with a silken thread. She took to her ladyship from the first moment she mounted her."

"And she seems to take to you too. I think your name is Tresithny, isn't it? You are grandson to the gardener at the castle?"

"Yes, sir," answered Saul, and said no more, holding the stirrup for Eustace to mount, but without anything the least servile or obsequious in his attitude. The young man noted also in his speech the absence of the vernacular peculiarities that characterised all the ordinary rustics of the place. Saul's voice was soft, and his speech had an intonation that bespoke him a native of these parts, but that was all. Just as it was with the grandfather, so it was with the grandson: they could put off the dialect when they chose, and use it when they chose. Abner had early taught his young charge the same purity of diction as he had acquired himself, and in speaking to his superiors Saul adopted it naturally.

"I don't think I'll ride again just yet, thanks," said Eustace, with his frank and pleasant smile. "If you don't object, I'll walk your way, Tresithny. I've often wanted to talk with you, but I've never had the opportunity before."

Saul's face was not responsive; but he was too well trained to refuse to lead the horse for the gentleman when asked, and after all it was not so very far back to his work, where he must of necessity shake off this undesirable companion.

"I want to speak to you, Tresithny, about the cause

which (in addition to the death of the Duchess) brought me just now into these parts. You know of course that, in the natural order of things, I shall one day be master here. It is not a position I covet. I hold that there is great injustice in making one man ruler and owner of half a county perhaps, and of huge revenues, holding vast powers in his hand whether he be capable or not of ruling wisely and well—simply from an accident of birth, whilst hundreds and thousands of his fellow-men are plunged in untold misery, and vice that is the outcome of that undeserved misery. I believe myself that the whole system of the country is rotten and corrupt, and that the day has come when a new and better era will dawn upon the world. But meantime, in the present, I have to look forward to succeeding his Grace, and I am naturally very greatly interested in the people of this place, and intensely anxious to see them elevated and ennobled.”

Saul suddenly looked at the young man as he had never looked at him before, and said between his teeth—

“That’s a strange thing for *you* to say, sir.”

“Why strange?” asked Eustace, half guessing the answer,

“Because, sir, if once the people begin to think for themselves, to see for themselves, and to understand the meaning of things around them, they soon won’t stand what they see—won’t stand that one set of men in the country should have everything, and roll in wealth and wallow in luxury, whilst they can’t get bread to put in their children’s mouths. They’ll think it’s time their turn came—as they did in France, I’ve heard, not so very long ago, and that’ll be a bad day for you and for all those like you.”

“Yes,” answered Eustace, with emphasis, “such a bad day for us, and (if *that* form of revolution were repeated) such a bad day for England too—ay, and for you, Tre-sithny, and your class—that we men who recognise and

deplore the injustice and tyranny of the present system are resolved to try and prevent it by making the people's cause ours, and ridding them of their grievous wrongs before they shall have been goaded to madness and rise in ignorant savagery, and become butchers and not reformers. The French Revolution turned France into a veritable hell upon earth. What we are striving to accomplish is to bring a day of peace and plenty, and justice and happiness upon England, without the shedding of one drop of blood, without any but gentle measures, and the increase of confidence and goodwill between class and class."

"And do you think you are going to do it?" asked Saul, with a grim look about his mouth, which Eustace did not altogether understand.

"I think so—I trust so. Earnest and devoted men of every class are banded together with that object. But, Tresithny, we want the help of the people. We want the help of such as you. What is the use of our striving to give their rights to the people if they remain in stolid apathy and do not ask for them? We must awaken and arouse them; we must teach them discontent with their present state of misery and ignorance, and then open the way for them to escape from it. Do you understand at all what I mean? We must awaken and arouse them. They are—in this part of the world, at least—like men sleeping an unnatural drugged sleep. The poison of ignorance and apathy is like opium in its effects upon their spirits. We must awaken and arouse them before there is hope for cure. Tresithny, we want men of intelligence like you to help in this work. You know their ways and their thoughts. You can appeal to their slumbering senses far better than we can do. We want to interest those who live with them and amongst them, and whose language they understand as they cannot understand ours. There is a great work to be accomplished

by such as you, Tresithny, if you will but join the good cause."

Saul was roused by a style of talk for which much of his recent brooding had prepared the way, and made a reply which showed Eustace that here at least there was no impassable barrier of ignorance or apathy to be overcome. In ten minutes' time the men were in earnest talk, Eustace giving his companion a masterly summary of the state of parties and the feeling of the day (vastly different from anything he had heard before, and before which his mental horizon seemed to widen momentarily), and he joining in with question and retort so apt and pointed, that Eustace was more and more delighted with his recruit, and felt that to gain such a man as Saul Tresithny to his side would be half the battle in St. Bride's.

But even here he could not achieve quite the success he coveted. He could implant the gospel of discontent easily enough—the soil was just of the kind in which the plant would take ready root; but with that other side of the doctrine—that endeavour to make men distinguish between the abuses, and the men who had hitherto appeared to profit by them—ay, there was the rub!

"You speak, sir, sometimes of doing all this without making the people hate their tyrants and their oppressors; but that isn't human nature. If they've a battle to fight against those that hold the power now, and if they are stirred up to fight it, they will hate them with a deadly hatred; and even when the victory is ours, as you say it will and must be one day, the hatred will go on and on. It's in our blood, and it'll be there till the world's end. We may forget it whilst we're sleeping; but once you and the like of you wake us up, it won't sleep again in a hurry; no, and it shall not either!" And the young man raised his arm and shook his fist in the air with a wild gesture, as though hurling defiance at the whole world.

"Ah! Tresithny, that is a natural feeling at the outset; and although we regret it, we cannot wonder at it, nor try to put it down with too strong a hand. But it is not the right feeling—and the right one will prevail at last, as I fully hope and trust. When we are boys at school and under restraint, against which we kick and fret, we look upon our masters as natural enemies; yet as we grow to manhood and meet them again, they become valued friends, and we laugh together over former animosities. And so it will be when the great work of reform is carried out in the generous spirit that we strive to instil; and you amongst others will be the first to hold out the hand of fellowship to all men, when wrongs have been righted, and society has come forth purified and ennobled by the struggle."

"Never!" cried Saul, with a look of such concentrated hatred that Eustace was startled. "You may talk till you are black in the face, sir, but you'll never talk out the hatred that is inborn between class and class. I know what that is. I am a man of the people, and for the rights of the people I am ready to live and to die. But I HATE THE RACE OF TYRANTS AND OPPRESSORS. I hate, and shall always hate and loathe them. Do not talk to me of goodwill and friendship. I will have none of it. I would set up a gallows over yonder, if I had my way, and hang every noble of the land upon it—as the French set up their guillotine, and set the heads of the king and queen and nobles of the land rolling from it!"

This was not by any means the spirit Eustace had desired to kindle in his disciple; but, after all, might not such sentiments be but the natural ebullition of enthusiasm in one who was young, untrained, and ardent? Certainly it was preferable in his eyes to apathy, and he was not disposed to strain the relations newly set up between them by opposing such sanguinary statements.

"The wrongs of humanity do indeed set up a strong

sense of righteous indignation," he said quietly; "but, believe me, the fierce and sanguinary revolutions of history have not had half the lasting effects of the bloodless ones accomplished by nations within themselves, by the accord of all classes concerned. That is what we are now bent upon striving to accomplish. We want your help, Tresithny, but not all the bloodthirsty eagerness you are disposed to give us. You must temper your zeal with discretion. Have you any personal cause to hate the so-called upper classes as you do?"

The young man's face was so dark and stern that Eustace almost repented of his question.

"Have I?—have I? Have I not, indeed! The upper classes! Ay, indeed, they are well called! Oh, can I but help to hurl them down to the dust, my life will not have been lived for nothing!"

Eustace looked earnestly at him.

"Can you not tell me what you mean, Tresithny? Believe me, I would be your friend, if you would permit it. I have seen no one since I came here in whom I take so warm an interest."

There was this about Eustace that always made him popular wherever he went, and that was his perfect sincerity. When he spoke words like these, it was obvious that he meant them, and those whom he addressed felt this by instinct. Saul did so, and the fierce darkness died out of his face. He turned and looked into Eustace's eyes, and Eustace returned the glance steadily, holding out his hand as he did so.

"I mean what I say, Tresithny," he said, with a smile. "If you will have me for a friend, I will be worthy of your confidence."

And then Saul, by a sudden impulse, put his hand into that of the Duke of Penarvon's heir, and the compact was sealed.

"I will tell you my story, or rather my mother's story,"

he said, after a few moments of silence, "and then perhaps you will understand what I have said. It is common enough—too common, perhaps, to interest you; but to me it can never become common. My grandfather was gardener to the Duke. He had a loving wife, and one daughter, whom they both loved as the apple of their eye. When she was old enough to do something for herself, she was taken into the castle and rose to be second maid to her Grace, who was always very kind to her attendants, and took pains that the girl should be taught many things that would be of value to her as she grew up in life. There was plenty of fine company at the castle then: it was before Lady Bride was born, and her Grace's health gave way. Of course I cannot tell what went on; but a day came when my mother disappeared from St. Bride, and none knew where she had gone. It killed her mother, for there was no manner of doubt but that she had been persuaded to go with or after one of the fine gentlemen who had been visiting there."

"Or one of their servants," suggested Eustace, very quietly.

For a moment Saul paused, as though such an idea had never entered his head before, as indeed it never had done. He had heard very little of his young mother's mournful tale, but he had always believed that she left her parents for the protection of one of the Duke's fine popinjay friends.

"I don't know," he answered sullenly, "but they all said it was a certain gentleman. She broke her father's heart, and killed her mother, and came back at the end of a year to die herself. She could never tell her story—or would not—whether or not she had been betrayed. That we shall never know; but she left me behind her to my grandfather's care, and I have grown up knowing all. I never would enter the castle as servant. I never would, and I never will. I will carry my enmity to *your* class,

sir, to my life's end, and I will fight against it with might and main, and with all the powers that I have. I have taken your hand in friendship, because I see you mean well by us, and because I cannot help it; but I will never do so a second time. I will not make a second friend of one above me in rank. I will keep the right to fight against them and to hate—*hate*—HATE them—and not all your honeyed pleadings can change that. Now I have told you all, and you can choose whether you will have me or not; for it will be war to the death when I fight, and you may as well know it first as last!”

Eustace smiled at the vehemence of his disciple as he said quietly—

“We will have you, Saul, hatred and all. You are too useful a tool to be spared because your edge is over sharp.”

And thus the compact was sealed between them.





CHAPTER VII

THE KINDLED SPARK

DON'T approve of it," said the Duke, bringing his hand down upon the table with an emphasis that made all the glasses on it ring. "You may talk as you will, Eustace; you may mix argument with sophistry as much as you like, but you'll never make black white by all the rhetoric of the world. I don't like it. I don't like the whole movement, and I don't believe that good will ever come of it; but leaving alone that point, on which we shall never agree, I hold that your methods are vile and hateful. You are setting class against class; you are rousing ill-will and stirring up hatred and enmity; you are teaching men to be discontented with their position in life——"

"Yes, sir, I know I am, because they *ought* to be discontented with degradation, ignorance, and hopeless misery. There is no reason why it should continue and increase as it does. We want them to be disgusted and discontented with it. Would there ever have been any civilisation and culture in the world had men always been contented to remain exactly in the position in which they were born?"

"Don't talk your stump-orator nonsense to me," said the old Duke sternly. "Confusion of terms does all very well to blind and deceive an ignorant mob; but keep it

for them, and don't try to advance your flimsy arguments by using it to men who can think and reason. The gradual growth of science and art and learning—the building on and on from an original foundation as the mental horizon extends—is generically different from the aimless discontent and selfish desire to rob and plunder, which is the outcome of the vaunted discontent you wish to inspire in the breasts of the people; and you know it as well as I do. You may keep *that* sort of talk for those who cannot see through it, and answer the fool according to his folly. But when you have men to deal with, and not ignorant children, you must think of sounder arguments if you desire to be listened to patiently."

Eustace flushed rather hotly at the taunt, which was hardly deserved in his case, although he was aware that his cause—like too many others—was promoted by means of arguments which could be torn to shreds by any shrewd thinker. But for all that, he had a profound belief in the gospel of discontent as the most powerful factor in the world's history, and he used it with a genuine belief in it, not with the desire to promote confusion in the minds of his hearers. But he did not reply to his kinsman's sharp retort, and after a brief pause the Duke recommenced his former diatribe.

"I have been patient with you, Eustace. I recognise fully your position here, and that you have a certain latitude with regard to the people which would be accorded to no one else; but——"

"Indeed, uncle, I hope you do not think I have presumed upon that," cried Eustace, with almost boyish eagerness, and a sidelong look at Bride, who was leaning back in her chair, a silent but watchful spectator of the little drama, and a keenly interested listener to the frequent arguments and dialogues which passed after dinner between her father and her cousin. It had become a regular custom with them to discuss the questions of the

day during the hour they passed at the exit of the servants and the advent of dessert. Neither of them were drinkers of wine, but both were accomplished talkers; and Bride, though seldom speaking, had come to take a keen interest in these discussions, which were adding to her store of facts, and admitting her to regions of debate which had hitherto been sealed to her. She was not ignorant of the events passing in the world. She had read the newspapers to her mother too regularly for that; but naturally she had not seen those organs of the press which advocated the new and more liberal ideas coming then into vogue; and many of her cousin's harrowing pictures of the fearful miseries of certain classes of the community haunted her with terrible persistency, and awakened within her an impotent longing to be able to do something to rescue them from such degradation and misery.

Her father, too, listened to Eustace with a moderation and patience which surprised her not a little, since up till the present time the very name of Radical filled him with disgust, and provoked him to an outbreak of scornful anger. If Eustace did not openly proclaim himself one of this party, he was advocating every principle of reform with all the ardour of one; and yet, until the present moment, the Duke had heard him expound his views, and had answered his arguments with considerable patience, and often with a certain amount of sympathy. To-day, however, the atmosphere was more stormy. Something had occurred to raise the displeasure of the old man, and soon it became apparent what the grievance was.

"I do not accuse you of presuming upon that," he said, still speaking sternly—"not intentionally, at any rate; but you do wrong in being led blindfold by your youthful and headstrong passions, and by teaching others to follow in your wake, without your substratum of sense and moderation. That young Tresithny has been openly

teaching the people in St. Erme's and St. Bride's to set law and order at defiance, and if necessary to avenge their so-called 'wrongs' at the sword's point. He is collecting a regular following in the place, and there will be mischief here before long if things go on at this rate. On inquiry I found, of course, that he has been seen frequently in conversation with you, Eustace. Of course the inference is plain. You are teaching him your views, and trying to make a demagogue and stump-orator of him, with apparently only too much success. And he is just the type of man to be most dangerous if he is once aroused, as you may find to your cost one of these days, Eustace."

"Most dangerous—or most useful—which is it?" questioned Eustace thoughtfully; yet, remembering some of the words and looks that had escaped Sanl during their conversations, he could hardly have answered that question himself.

"From whom have you heard this?" he asked. Eustace had himself been absent from the castle for a few days, spending his time in the neighbourhood, but not returning to his kinsman's house to sleep. He had returned this day only, to find the Duke's mood somewhat changed, and he began now to suspect the cause of this.

"Mr. Tremodart is my informant," answered the Duke briefly. "He will give you any information on the subject that you desire. I shall say no more. The subject is very distasteful and painful to me. I am well aware that I am growing old, and that the world is changing around me. I know perfectly that no power of mine will suffice to stem the current, and I shall therefore refrain from futile efforts. But none the less does it pain me that one bearing my name, and coming after me when I am gone, should be one of the foremost to stir up strife and set class against class, as you are doing, Eustace. And let me add just one more word of warning. It is an easy thing

to set a stone rolling down a hill-side ; but no man can foresee where it will stop when once in motion, and no human power can stop it when once the impetus is upon it. It will go hurtling down, carrying death and destruction with it ; and those who have set it in motion can simply stand helplessly by, looking with dismay at the ruin they have provoked. Beware how you set in motion the forces of anarchy, Eustace, for Heaven alone knows what the end will be when that is done !” and the old man rose from his seat and walked from the room with a quiet and sorrowful dignity of aspect which struck and touched both his hearers. It was so unusual for him to break through the trifling ceremonial rules of life, that the very fact of his leaving the table before his daughter had risen showed that he must be greatly disturbed in mind. Bride looked after him with wistful eyes, and then suddenly turned upon Eustace with an imploring air, which was harder still to resist.

“ You will not go on grieving him, Eustace !” she pleaded ; “ you will give it up ?”

“ Give what up, Bride ?” he asked quietly.

“ The actions which grieve him, which stir up strife in our peaceful community, which rouse hatred and foment discontent. Ah ! Eustace, if you would only give yourself to a nobler task, how much you might do for the cause of right !—whilst now you are, in the hope of doing good, fomenting the worst passions of the human heart, and leading men to break not only the laws of man, but those of God.”

Perhaps never before had Eustace been so strongly tempted as at that moment to abandon the cause to which he was pledged. Through all the weeks he had spent beneath the roof of Castle Penarvon, he had been conscious of two strong influences working upon him—one the desire to enkindle in the minds of the ignorant rustics the spark of discontent and revolt against needless wrongs, which

should result in reformed legislation, and the raising of the whole country ; the other, the keen desire to win for his wife the beautiful and unapproachable girl he called cousin, and who every day exercised over him a stronger and stronger power. With him it had been a case of love almost at first sight. Eustace was one of those men who are always striving to attain and obtain the best and highest good which the world has to offer, not as a matter of preference only, but as a matter of principle. Hitherto he had never seen a woman who stirred his heart, for he had never seen one who in any way corresponded to the lofty ideals of womanhood which he had kept pure within him from boyhood. His whole mind and soul had been given to study, to learning, and to the attainment of those objects upon which, as his mind matured, his whole being became set. Woman as an individual had neither part nor lot in his life until he met his cousin Bride, and knew before he had been many days at Penarvon that in her he had found his ideal. That she was a mystic, that she held extraordinary and altogether impracticable views of life, and lived in a world of her own which could never be his, he was perfectly aware ; but then he was also aware that the ideal woman of his dreams must likewise live a life apart, wrapped in her own pure imaginings and Divine ideals, until the power of love should awake within her another and a deeper life, and bring her to a knowledge of joys hitherto unknown. A sceptic himself, he was in nowise daunted to find that the woman of his choice was as devout, and almost as full of mystic fervour, as a mediæval nun. Somehow it all pieced in with his preconceived ideas of perfect womanhood, and he said within himself that this single-minded devotion and power to lead the higher life, when directed into other channels by the kindling touch of a great love, was exactly the force and power most needed for the work which must be that of his own life and

of hers who became bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh.

The cause was first with him, the woman second, when Bride was not present ; but when confronted by her soft deep eyes, when beneath the spell of her thrilling voice and the magnetic attraction which, with absolute unconsciousness, she exercised upon him, he was often conscious that the cause was relegated to the second place, and that the desire to win this woman for his wife took the foremost position there. It was so just at this moment. The words spoken by the Duke had struck somewhat coldly upon him. They were the echo of a thought which sometimes obtruded itself unsuggested when he was in conversation with those very men of whom he hoped most in the forwarding of the cause—the thought that after all he and such as he were playing with edged tools, and were rather in the position of boys experimenting with explosives of unknown force. They might safely reckon that what they desired might be accomplished by their means, but were they equally certain that, whereas they only meant to break down and overthrow certain obstructions which were standing in the way of progress and a better order, the forces they had set in motion might not sweep over all appointed bounds and land them in a state of confusion and anarchy they never contemplated for a moment at the outset ? This was, he knew, the cry of all supporters of the old order, the time-honoured cry against any sort of progress or reform. But might there not be perhaps some sound substratum of truth at the bottom ?—and were he and his comrades wise to listen always with a smile of pity, and even of contempt, when that plea was brought forward ?

Just for a moment, under Bride's pleading glances, under the impression produced by the Duke's warning, Eustace was tempted to fling to the winds everything save his overmastering desire to call Bride his own, to win her love even at the sacrifice of his own career ; but before

the burning thoughts had been translated into words or had passed his lips, other and cooler considerations pushed themselves to the front, and he checked himself before attempting a reply. After that his words were chosen with care, and fell quietly and resolutely from his lips.

“I would do much, very much, for you and for your father, Bride; but I cannot, even for you, be untrue to myself, and to the cause of suffering humanity. The woes of our brethren are crying aloud for redress. Christianity and humanity are alike disgraced by the scenes which are daily enacted in this Christian land. Believe me, Bride, you and I are nearer in heart than you are able yet to see. You have lived your life in this peaceful spot, and know little or nothing of the fearful abuses which stalk rampant through the land. Did you know what I know, had you seen what I have seen, you would know that I am embarked upon a righteous cause, and that the power you call God—which is in very truth the spirit of justice, mercy, and true and lasting peace—is with us. I do not deny that, in stirring up men’s hearts, even in a righteous cause, evil and selfish passions are too often inevitably stirred also. Human nature finds it all but impossible to hate the abuse without hating those who in their eyes at least are the living embodiment of that abuse. We have a twofold mission to execute—to rouse in men a hatred of evil and oppression, whilst at the same time striving to inculcate patience towards those who appear to them to be the incarnation of that evil. The one task is of course easier at the outset than the other; but we do not despair of accomplishing both. No reformation of abuses was ever yet made without the stirring up of evil passions—without many and great dangers and mistakes; yet the world has been better, and purer, and wiser for these same reforms, and so it will be again. Ah! Bride,

my beautiful cousin, we want noble-hearted women to aid us in the task. If we men can rouse the slumbering to claim the rights of humanity for themselves, you women can pour oil on troubled waters, and instil gentle and tender feelings into rude hearts that we find it hard to subdue. If you would walk hand in hand with me in this thing, Bride, how much might not be accomplished for Penarvon and those poor benighted people in whom your own interest is so keen! Bride, will you not let it be so? Will you not help me? Will you not help a cause which is pledged to raise the people of this land from misery and degradation, and teach them that even for them there is a higher and a better life, if they will but strive and attain to it?"

The girl's eyes were fixed upon his face in one of her inscrutable gazes, in which she seemed to be looking him through and through, and reading his very soul, whilst hers was to him as a sealed book.

"Ah! Eustace," she said very softly, "would that you *were* striving to teach to them the true meaning of the higher life. Then, indeed, would I most gladly, most willingly, follow where you lead; but, alas, alas! I fear me it is not so. Oh, my cousin, can you truly tell me that you yourself are striving after the higher life—the highest life—the life of the Kingdom—so that you can teach it to another?"

He did not answer—for, indeed, he did not fully understand her; he only knew that in speaking of the higher life he and she meant something altogether different, although he still trusted that the difference was but superficial, and that deeper down lay an accord which would some day become patent to both. Meantime, with her eyes upon him, he knew not what to say; and Bride, with a look of sorrow and gentle compassion that went to his heart, rose and glided away, leaving him alone in the great dining-hall, with the flicker of many wax

candles mingling with the fading light of the March evening.

It was half-past six, and the light without, although fast dying, was not yet gone. Eustace felt it impossible after what had passed to join either the Duke in his study or Bride in the drawing-room; and taking his hat and putting on a thin overcoat, he sallied out from the castle, and after descending the road by the wide zigzag drive, he paused a moment at the lodge gate, and then turned off in the direction of the parsonage, where Mr. Tremodart lived alone in the solitude of childless widowhood.

Eustace had been to that house before. He knew its disorderly and comfortless aspect, the long low rooms littered about with pipes and books and papers, fishing-tackle and riding-whips. He knew well the aspect of the tall gaunt parson, seated at some table with a pipe between his lips, and his long fingers busy over the manufacture of artificial flies. For Mr. Tremodart was a mighty fisherman, and there was excellent trout-fishing in the many streams that watered the plains above, and pike-fishing in the land-locked lakes high up in the moors. The season dear to the heart of anglers was coming on apace, and Eustace found the master of the ramshackle abode deep in the mysteries of his craft.

Eustace had not pulled the cracked and broken bell. He knew that the deaf old crone who lived at the parsonage, and did as much or as little of the needful work there as her goodwill or rheumatism permitted, deeply resented a needless journey to the door, which always stood wide open from morning to night, save in the very bitterest weather. He walked straight in, and after glancing in at one or two open doors, was at length guided by a small stream of light beneath the one farthest down the passage, to that place where the parson was found at work. Mr. Tremodart had long since ceased

to have a regular room in which either to sit or to eat. He would use one of the many apartments upon the ground-floor of his rambling parsonage for both purposes, until it grew too terribly dirty and untidy to be borne, and then he would move into another, gradually making the whole round. At the end of some three or four months he would turn in a couple of stout young women, with pails and brooms and dusters, and have the whole house swept and garnished, whilst he spent the day on the moors with rod and gun; and then the rotatory fashion of living would begin over again, the old woman confining her labours to her kitchen, preparing the needful meals in such fashion as she chose, and making her master's bed and setting his sleeping chamber to rights in the morning. Mr. Tremodart appeared quite content with his *ménage* as it existed; and if he were satisfied, there was no need for any one to waste pity on him.

He welcomed Eustace with a smile, his plain broad face lighting up genially, in a fashion that redeemed it from ugliness, despite the blunt features and tanned skin. He did not rise, or even hold out his hand, having both well occupied in some delicate operation of tying; but he indicated with a nod a chair for his guest, and asked if he would smoke.

Eustace had acquired in Germany a habit which was still in his own country designated as "filthy" by a large section of the upper classes; and though he never smoked at the castle, was not averse to indulging himself in the recesses of the parsonage. He took a pipe from his pocket and filled it leisurely, coming out at last with the matter next his heart.

"What is this I hear about young Tresithny? He seems to have been setting the place by the ears in my absence."

The parson gave him one keen quick glance out of his deep-set eyes, and remarked in the soft drawling tone

that had a strong touch of the prevailing vernacular about it—

“I think yu should know more about it than I du, sir. I take it he is your disciple. It is yu who are going about teaching our country-folk that they are being ground down and oppressed, is it not? Well, may be it will please yu tu know that young Tresithny is following in your steps and making all St. Bride writhe under a sense of a deep and terrible oppression she never found out for herself before.”

Eustace flushed very slightly. He was keen to note a touch of irony when directed against the cause he had at heart. He looked to meet it in many quarters, but he had hardly expected to find it here, nor was he absolutely certain of the drift of Mr. Tremodart’s remark.

“What has he been doing?” he asked briefly.

“Why, I think yu would call it turning stump-orator,” was the reply, as Mr. Tremodart bent over his work again. “He hasn’t any time by the week to help enlighten the ignorance of his fellow-men, but he was good enough to invite them to a preaching or a speaking on the shore on Sunday morning in church hours, so we had an empty church save for the Duke and Lady Bride, and some of the castle servants.” The parson raised his head and gently scratched his nose with his forefinger as he concluded reflectively, “If yu come tu think of it, ’tis a curious thing how much more attractive it is to mankind to know how they may rob their neighbours than how they may save their souls.”

Eustace could not for the life of him refrain from the retort which sprang to his lips—

“And you hold that they do learn that important lesson by coming to the weekly service at St. Bride’s church?”

Mr. Tremodart continued gently to rub his nose with his forefinger. His rugged face expressed no annoyance.

rather some compunction and humility, and yet he answered with the quiet composure which in most cases appeared natural to him.

"I know what yu are thinking, young man. I can tell yu that without either feeling or meaning offence. Yu are thinking that my poor discourses in yon pulpit are but sorry food for the souls of men—and I am with yu there. Yu are thinking that if I shut up the church on a Sunday from time to time on some paltry excuse, I cannot greatly value its services for the poor. Yu could say some very harsh things of me, and I in shame and sorrow would be forced to say 'Amen' to them. I am a sorry minister, and I know it; but for all that, I would have yu distinguish between the unworthy servant and the Master he serves. My incapacity, idleness, and mistakes must not be set down to Him. A most unworthy and disobedient servant may yet serve in some sort the best of masters."

"Forgive me," said Eustace frankly; "I should not have spoken as I did; although I confess I was thinking of the service suspended on account of the sitting hen."

"Yes, I made an error there," answered Mr. Tremodart, pushing his hands through his hair; "but she was the best hen in my yard. I had set my heart on having a brood of her chickens to bring up, and she was so wild and shy that I feared we'd never find her, and that the foxes would get at the eggs of the chicks before ever we could make sure of them. I had a bad cold too, and was in bed when the old sexton came hurrying in to tell me of the find. I knew once we rudely and hastily disturbed her she would never sit again, and I had no other broody hen to take her place; so I just said we'd have no service that day, thinking David would go and say it was my cold that kept me to home. But instead, he told the story of the hen, and shamed me before my flock. And yet I cannot complain—it was my own sinfulness. But

mark my word, my young friend: however sinful the minister may be, the church is the house of God, and a blessing rests on those who come thither to worship Him, talk as you hot-headed young reformers may of your newer and more rational religions which are to take the place of that ordained by God."

With Mr. St. Aubyn Eustace would have argued, but this man had not the learning to enable him to support his beliefs, and Eustace declined controversy by saying, with a smile—

"I am, at least, quite ready to admit that if we have souls in your sense of the word, they may easily be saved through regular attendance at St. Bride's or any other church."

The Cornishman threw back his head with a gesture that was at once emphatic and picturesque.

"Young man, do not mock," he said in his deep-toned, resonant voice. "The soul of man is a mystery which your philosophy will never fathom; and mark me again—when I speak of saving souls and attendance at church in one breath, I mean something far different than what you imply in your light phrase. What I should say is this—let the preacher be never so ignorant and unworthy, in our churches we have forms of prayer which embrace the whole circle of Christian doctrine. On our knees we confess our sins to God; on our knees we hold up before Him the one Atonement of the Cross as our only hope of salvation, and pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit to rule and direct our hearts. We read the word of God in our midst. We offer psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. And I say again that Christ has taught us that penitent confession, coupled with faith in Him, is sufficient for salvation—that every erring sinner coming to Him is never cast out, and that He has given His Spirit to be our guide and comforter through life. Wherefore I say and maintain that all those who truly follow the

services offered in our churches week by week may find in them salvation, whether he who offers them be as weak and unworthy as the man before you now."

Eustace rose and held out his hand.

"Believe me, sir, I had no such stricture in my mind when I spoke. I respect solid conviction and true faith wherever I meet it, even when I hold that the faith is misplaced, and that the day is coming when a sounder and truer form of worship will be seen in this earth. At least we are in accord in wishing the best for the people we both love; only at present we disagree as to what is the best. In days to come I trust and believe that we shall be in accord even here. Meantime I will see this hot-headed young Tresithny, and warn him not to hold his addresses at times when men should be in church. The young and ardent have more zeal than discretion, but if I can help it you shall not be annoyed again."

"Nay, I am not annoyed," said the parson, with a broad smile; "his Grace was more annoyed than I. But yu will have a tougher job in holding back yon mettlesome lad, I take it, than in starting him off along the road. But there is good in the Tresithnys, though there is a tough grain in them which makes it no light task to try and carve them into shape. Must yu go? Then fare yu well, and give you a good issue to your mission."

Eustace strode away, and without any pause set off in the direction of Farmer Teazel's farm in the next parish. He walked rapidly, as a man does when burning words are welling up in his heart, and he seeks to prepare himself for an interview in which strong arguments may be needed. But when he returned along the same road, it was with slower step and bent head. He had found his disciple, and had spoken long and earnestly with him, but had come away with the conviction that he had spoken in vain. He had kindled a spark in Saul's passionate

heart which had lighted a long-smouldering flame. Now this had burst into active conflagration, and what the result would be no man could yet say. At present a violent class hatred was raging within him, and he was bent upon setting class against class in the spirit of the true demagogue. The wiser and more moderate teachings of Eustace fell upon deaf ears. The young man began to see that Saul was growing far less keenly interested in the wrongs of his fellow-men, which it was right and needful to alleviate and remove, than in the opportunity afforded by a general movement after reform for a rising against the privileged classes, for whom he had long cherished an undying hatred. The very intelligence and quickness of the young man made him the more dangerous. He could turn upon Eustace with some argument of his own, used perhaps for another purpose, and by no means intended to be universally applied, and deduce from it conclusions only too mercilessly logical, tending to the subversion of the empire and the awakening of a spirit of lawless violence, which of all things Eustace desired to prevent. He had hoped, when first he took to giving instruction and counsel to so apt and attentive a pupil, that he should retain over Saul the influence he gained in the first place; and even now he recognised that the young man was deeply attached to him, and believed that so long as his eye was upon him he would keep within bounds. But the limits of Eustace's visit to Penarvon were drawing near, and he did not think, in face of what was occurring, that the Duke would press him to remain. He would leave, and then what would happen to that wild spirit? Already the farmer had threatened him with dismissal if he persisted in his obstinate courses, and tried to instil and introduce lawless opinions amongst his servants. Saul had not been daunted by that threat. It appeared that already he had made friends amongst kindred spirits in the town.

and would find support and employment there if he chose to break away from his old associates.

Eustace walked back to the castle in a state of mind that was by no means happy or satisfied. He had made a great step in Penarvon since his arrival; but was it altogether such a step as was wise or right?





CHAPTER VIII

BRIDE'S PERPLEXITIES

BUT if Eustace suffered from doubts and fears, even when embarked upon a cause which he fully believed to be that of right and justice, other people were not exempt from their share of perplexity and mental distress, and certainly the youthful Lady Bride was no exception to this rule. For her, things seemed to have come hardly. Just as she was deprived of the loving counsels and tender training of a mother whom she literally adored, was she confronted by problems and questions which had never entered into her inner life before, and which threatened at times to upheave many of her most cherished notions, or to land her in a perfect sea of doubt and bewilderment.

True, she had not grown up in actual ignorance of the questions beginning to agitate the world, but hitherto she had regarded them, as it were, from an infinite distance: they had not penetrated to her own sphere. She could regard them in perspective, and moralise upon them in an abstract fashion totally distinct from that which confronted her, now that they had in a sense intruded into her very home, and risen up in altogether unexpected proportion before her eyes. Calm as she appeared to the eyes of those about her, remote and aloof as Eustace felt her to be, dwelling in a world of her own, and hardly awake to the throbbing life of that other world of which

he was a member, she was in reality far more aware of its pulsating life than he ever dreamed, and far more perplexed by the problems of the times than he as yet suspected. Pity and love for the humble and poor had been instilled into Bride's heart by her mother from her earliest years, and it was a lesson not likely to be ignored now that she was left so lonely and desolate in her palatial home. Towards her father she felt a deep and reverential affection and compassion, and they had drawn a very little nearer together during this time of common sorrow ; but the habits of a lifetime are seldom broken through, even when there is willingness to break them, and the Duke found himself unable to open his heart to his young daughter, as he had learned to do to his gentle wife, even when he was conscious that if the effort could be made it would be abundantly rewarded. He was gentle towards her, and more tender than he had ever been in his life before, but there was no impulse of confidence between them. It was just as hard for Bride to try to speak to him out of her heart (as she had been wont to do to her mother) as for him to cast off his reserve before her ; so that when perplexities arose within her, the girl had to fight them out alone, and increasingly hard did she find the battle as day by day fresh thoughts and problems presented themselves before her mental vision.

Mr. St. Aubyn might have helped her, but she was timid of seeking him out. She felt towards him a deep and reverential affection. She had always hung upon his words when he visited her mother, and the two talked together long and earnestly of the coming crisis in the world's history of which both were keenly conscious, and for which both were preparing themselves in different measure. But the girl had never opened her own heart to the clergyman, or indeed to any person except her mother, and she did not know how to make the first

advance now, although feeling often in sore need of guidance and help.

But there was still one person to whom she sometimes spoke when the sense of the burden became greater than she could bear, and that was to the old gardener, Abner Tresithny. She had a great respect, and indeed affection, for the faithful old servant, who from childhood had always been ranked as one of her friends, so that the habit of reserve had not extended to her intercourse with him. Bride had her own outdoor pursuits in the garden, which Abner superintended with his advice and assistance, and as the pair worked together in greenhouse or potting-shed, they often talked of many other matters than the plants they tended. Bride had gained much of her insight into human nature and the state of the village from Abner; and now when Saul's fervid discourses had stirred up so much excitement there, it was natural that the matter should be mentioned, and that other things of a kindred nature should be discussed.

Abner had been pained and grieved by his grandson's (apparently sudden) development, and Bride saw that the subject was a sore one with him. With her ready tact she avoided the point which most pained the old man, and opened her heart to him on the subject which had been with her night and day for many a long week now, and which will raise itself before each one of us with a ceaseless iteration so long as this state of sin and misery lasts in the world.

"O Abner, can we wonder?—can we blame them so very much if they do rise in rebellion and revolt? Why is it—ah! why is it that some—not just a few here and there, but hundreds and thousands—even millions of human beings are born into the world to a life of hopeless misery, degradation, and poverty, from which not one man in a thousand has power to raise himself? My cousin has been telling me things—I have heard him and

my father talking—and it goes to my very heart to think what it all means. I know—oh! I can never doubt it—that in every human soul there is the power to live the higher life by the grace of the Spirit of God; but oh! Abner, how is it, humanly speaking, possible that this germ of heavenly fire should be developed in such surroundings? How can those encompassed by every physical misery and degradation ever lift their hearts and their hopes heavenward? How can it be looked for? And why does God permit such awful inequalities in the destinies of His children? If He loves us all—as we know He does—why, oh! why are these things allowed?”

The pain in her face and in her voice plainly showed how deeply she had taken to heart what she had gleaned of late respecting the condition of a large section of the population at that time. Abner looked at his young mistress with a world of sympathy in his steady, deep-set eyes, and slowly shook his head.

“There be many of us ask that same question, my Ladybird, as we go on in life, and none of us can rightly answer it. And yet may be the answer is under our hand all the while. It is the sin of man that brought the curse into the world; and ever since the hardness of man’s heart has been making him choose the evil and the curse instead of the way of the Lord and the blessing, and every generation sinks the world deeper and deeper into the slough.”

“I know, I know that. Sin is at the root of all,” answered Bride, with quick eagerness, “but that does not seem to answer everything. It is the awful inequalities of the world that frighten me, and the sense of the terrible gulf that seems to divide such lives as mine from those of the miserable women and children born in the midst of a squalor and misery of which my cousin tells me I can have no conception. We are all born in sin,

but we are not all born to utter want and wretchedness. God loves all His children alike: why should such things be? Oh, why should they be?"

She clasped her hands together in a passion of perplexity and pain. The eyes which were so deep and inscrutable to Eustace were full of a pleading intensity of gaze, as though she would wring an answer to her appeal from the heavens themselves. Abner looked at her with a softening of the lines of his rugged face; and as he steadily pursued his task of cleansing from blight a great camellia tree that stood in the centre of the conservatory, he made an answer that was eminently characteristic of him, and which roused the instant interest of the girl.

"My Ladybird, I think we can none of us rightly answer such a question, because the ways of the Almighty are past finding out, and we can by no stretch of our poor finite minds hope to understand the eternal wisdom of the Infinite. And yet, inasmuch as we have God's own word that we are made in His image, we can just get here and there a glimpse into the workings of His mind; and I often think that a gardener at his toil gets a clearer bit of insight into His dealings than some others can do."

"Oh, tell me how," cried Bride, who dearly loved to listen to Abner's deductions from the world of nature to the realm of human experience. She had been used to listening to his allegories from childhood, and always found in them food for thought and farther research.

Quietly pursuing his task, as was his way when thinking most deeply, Abner took up his parable again.

"It sometimes comes to me like this, my lady, when I am amongst my flowers and plants and seeds, and folks come to me and say, 'Abner, why do you do this?' and 'Abner, why do you do that?' Look at the little seeds as they lie on your hand—seeming so like to one another that even the best of us would be puzzled to know some kinds apart; but when they grow up, how different they

appear, and how different they have to be treated! Some are hardy things, and are put out to face the biting winds and cruel snows of winter, and nothing given them for protection, whilst others are tenderly protected from the least hardship, and grow up in the soft warm air of the hot-house, watered and tended and watched over like petted children. Is it because the gardener loves one sort of seed more than another that he treats them so differently? What sort of a garden would he have when the summer came had he put the tender hot-house seeds out in the cold ground, and tried to grow the hardy seedlings in a hot-house? And then again, see how the different plants are treated as they grow up under the same gardener's eye. Look at these great specimen heliotropes and fuchsias and petunias. How were they treated when they were young?—pinched in, trained, clipped, kept back, as it seemed, in every possible way, everything against them, everything, as one would say, taken from them, till the right stature and height and growth had been attained, and then encouraged to bud and break where it had been decided they should; and now see the beautiful graceful trees—a joy to the eye and to the heart—covered with blossom, rejoicing as it seems in their beauty, the pride of the gardener who seemed at first so cruel to them, so resolved to keep them barren and unlovely.”

Bride drew a long breath and clasped her hands together. She had asked sometimes deep down in her heart why her own life had been left so desolate by the death of her mother. Was she in some sort finding an answer now? Was it perhaps for her ultimate good and for the glory of God that she was thus heavily chastened in her youth?

Abner had made a slight pause, but now he continued, speaking in the same slow way, with the same rather remarkable choice of words for a man of his class.

“And again, look at another class of plants—look at

our bulbs. Does not the gardener find a quiet nook for them in the garden where they will never be disturbed, and put them in, and let them come up year after year undisturbed and unmolested? Is it because he loves them more that he leaves them to bloom at their own time and in their own fashion, and does not even cut down their leaves when the blooming season is over? Why is he so cruel (as the ignorant folk might put it) to some of his plants, and so tender to others? Why does he treat them so differently? Why do some grow up and flourish for a season only, and are rooted up and cast away at its close, whilst others remain year by year in the ground, or are tended in warmth and luxury in the glass homes provided for them? Why such inequalities when originally all start alike from a tiny seed germ, one of which scarce differs from another? Is it because the gardener is partial or cruel? or because he knows as no untrained person can, what is best for each, and how in the end, after patient waiting and watching, the most perfect garden will arise up under his hand? And if this is so in our little world, can we not understand that it must be something the same in the great garden of God—that kingdom of Christ for which we are waiting and watching, and for which He is working in His own all-powerful and mysterious way? Ah! how often I think of that as I go about my daily toil—that reign of the Lord's upon earth, when the wilderness shall blossom as the rose, where sorrow and pain and sin shall be done away, and we shall see the meaning of all those things which perplex and bewilder us now, and understand the love in the Father's heart, although the discipline seemed hard to understand at the first."

Bride raised her eyes with the light shining in them which the thought of the coming kingdom of the Lord always brought there.

"Ah! yes," she said softly, "we shall know then—

we shall understand then—we shall see face to face. O Abner, would that that day might come quickly! Ah! why does not God hear the cry of His people in their trouble and perplexities, and send forth the Great Deliverer? Are we not praying for His appearing hour by hour and day by day? Why does He tarry so long?"

Abner slowly shook his head. He understood perfectly those utterances of the girl, which from time to time filled Eustace with absolute bewilderment. One result of the awakening of spiritual perception, and of the unceasing prayer which had been offered up by all sorts and conditions of men for many years, had been a deep and earnest conviction that the Second Advent was at hand, that the French Revolution was but the commencement of the Great Apostasy of the latter days, and that the times of the end were approaching. Amongst all the confusion of prophetic interpretation stirring the minds of men and raising up countless differences of opinion and beliefs as to what was coming upon the earth, there stood out one paramount conviction which attracted multitudes to adhere to it, which was that before the final judgments were to be poured upon the earth, as foretold in the Revelation according to St. John, there would be a gathering together of the first-fruits to Christ—the dead and living saints called alike to meet Him in the air, and thus escape the horrors that were coming upon the world—the company typified in Scripture as the hundred and forty-four thousand sealed ones standing with the Lamb upon Mount Zion before the last vials of wrath are poured out, and before the resurrection of the multitude whom no man can number, who have come scathlessly through the great tribulation of the days of Antichrist.

This had been the unshaken conviction of the Duchess, and Bride had received it from her mother with an absolute trust. Abner, like many men of his class and race,

was equally filled with a devout hope and expectation of living to see the Lord appear without sin unto salvation. The wave of revived spirituality and personal faith which had swept over the West Country with the advance of Methodism a generation before, had, as it were, prepared the minds of men for a fresh development of faith in the fulfilment of God's prophetic word. Methodism itself had already begun to fossilise to a certain extent into a system, and had been rent by faction and split into hostile camps; but this new wave of awakened spirituality was sweeping over the land with all its first strength, and destined in one form or another to do a great work in the Church. The thought and the hope of the Kingdom was one so familiar and so congenial to those who had accepted it, that already they were striving after the life of the Kingdom in the present world of sorrow and sin. To Bride it was the very source and centre of all her happiness in life, and anything that turned her thoughts back to it again brought solace and comfort with it; so that even the hope that the darkness and perplexity around her would be explained and made clear in the Kingdom, and that what she now saw with pain and shrinking would at last prove to be God's way of bringing good out of the mass of evil engendered by the sin and disobedience of man, brought a measure of comfort with it, and Bride walked through the sunny gardens in a deep reverie, looking around her at the awakening of nature with a strange but intensely real hope that it was but the type and foretaste of another and more wondrous resurrection, in which she might be counted worthy to have a share, perhaps even before this same young year had run its appointed course.

Her meditations were interrupted by the sudden appearance at her side of her cousin Eustace. How he came she knew not. She had not observed his approach, but here he was walking beside her; and as she raised her eyes for

a moment to his face, she was aware that it wore an expression of strange concentration, whilst at the same time in his voice there was a tone which she did not remember ever to have heard there before.

"Bride," he said, speaking more abruptly than usual, "you know that I am going away soon?"

"I had heard something of it. I did not know the day was fixed. I think you must feel glad. There is so little to do at Penarvon—for one like you."

"I fear your father thinks I have done too much, as it is," answered Eustace hastily. "Bride, have I made him hate me? Has he spoken with disapproval of me to you?"

"Oh, no!" answered Bride. "My father seldom speaks disparagingly of any one who is not there to defend himself. He would say nothing to me that he did not say to you; and if he did, I could not repeat it, of course."

"No," answered Eustace quickly; "I was wrong in asking; but I was nervously afraid, I think, lest he should have said something to do hurt to my cause. Bride, are you sorry I am going away? Will you miss me when I am gone?"

He spoke with covert eagerness, almost with excitement, and Bride was puzzled at the note of emotion in his voice, and paused to consider her answer. She was always transparently truthful and sincere, and although brought up to show courtesy to all with whom she came in contact, she had never taught herself to utter the platitudes and shallow untruths of society, and chose her words with care when appealed to in such a fashion.

"I think I shall miss you," she answered, looking reflectively before her. "It will seem strange not to see your face at table, or to have some one to talk to in the evenings. I think father will miss you too. He likes to converse with one who knows the world and can under-

stand him. Perhaps you will come again some day, Eustace?"

"Do you ask it, Bride?" he questioned, his voice quivering.

"I have no power to invite guests to Penarvon," she answered gently. "My father has never given me leave to do so; but I think he will be glad to think you will come again: he has so few belonging in any way to him now."

"Would you be glad, Bride?" he asked, in the same tense and almost impassioned way; "that is what I wish to know. Would you be glad to think that I should come again soon?"

Something in his tone aroused in Bride a vague sense of shrinking and distaste. She could not understand exactly what produced this feeling; but at that moment her impulse was to leave her cousin hastily and fly to the shelter of her own room. That being impossible, she could only retire into the shell of her own impenetrable reserve, and Eustace was at once aware that some of the light had gone out of her eyes, and that she very slightly drew away from him.

"I do not know," she said very quietly; "that depends upon so many things. You have been very kind, Eustace, and yet you have done things which have brought great trouble to us. If you could learn to be a comfort to my father, I would welcome you gladly again; but you can hardly expect it when you trouble and distress him."

"Bride, Bride, do not speak so! do not drive me to despair!" cried Eustace suddenly, losing his long-preserved self-control. "Do you not know that I love you, that I have loved you almost ever since I saw you first three months ago? Oh, my love, my life, only love me in return, and do what you will with me! I am yours, body and soul, and together we will walk through life, and yours shall be the guiding and directing will, for you are the

guiding star of my life! Bride, Bride! hear me! Be my wife, and I will be in the future what you will. You shall rule my life for me. Only let me know that your love is mine, and I care for nothing else!"

She understood then, and the surprise of it all held her mute and spell-bound. Perhaps no maiden in the length and breadth of the land had grown up more oblivious of the thought of love and marriage than Lady Bride Marchmont. No young companions had she ever known to suggest such ideas. Her mother had preserved the guarded silence on the subject that mothers are wont to do whilst their daughters are yet young, and her father had followed his wife's example. She had seen the best and happiest side of married life in the tender love and dependence of her parents; but as a thing applied to herself she had never given it a thought, and now she recoiled from this passionate appeal with a sense of shrinking and distaste which she found it difficult to refrain from expressing in words that would inflict pain on the man before her. She did not wish to pain him. She was woman enough to know that he meant to do her honour by this proffer of love and service; but he had utterly failed to awaken any answering chord in her heart, and she felt that he ought not to have spoken as he had done, or to use such arguments to her.

"No, Eustace," she said, not ungently, as he tried to take her hand. "You must not speak to me so. It is not right. It is not even manly. I think you can know very little of me when you speak of offering yourself to me body and soul, or tell me that you care for nothing else if you can have my love. Do you think I can love any one, save with the love of a deep pity, who can place a mere earthly love before everything else, and talk as though his soul were his own to give into the keeping of another? Do you think I like to hear you say that you would even abandon a cause which seemed to you

holy and just and right, simply because you think I may not approve it? Do you wish to make of me your conscience-keeper? O Eustace! think what such words mean!—think what treachery they imply, not only to God but to man, and I am sure you yourself will be ashamed of them.”

“I can think of nothing but that I love you, Bride,” broke in Eustace, hotly and passionately, his heart moved by the wonderful beauty of the woman before him; her utter unconsciousness of the wild passions of love and tenderness stirring within him only rousing him to a sense of wilder resolve to win her at all cost. “I love you! I love you! I love you! All my religion, all my faith, all my happiness here or hereafter are comprised within the limits of those three little words. I love you! Surely you will not tell me in return that you hate me, and would spurn me from your presence. O Bride, my life, my love! do not say that you have no love to give me in return.”

There was something so appealing in his voice that her heart was touched with compassion, though with no answering response. She let him possess himself of her hand, but it lay cool and passive in his hot clasp.

“I do not hate you, Eustace—why should I? I do not hate any living thing. I do not spurn you. I do not spurn your love.”

“My darling, ten thousand thanks for that sweet word. If my love is not spurned, surely it will some day be returned! Bride, you will at least let me hope that?”

“I cannot help what you hope,” she answered, with childlike frankness. “But, Eustace, I do not think I can ever love you as you wish, and I can never, never, never be your wife unless I do. I like you as a cousin; but indeed that is all. I do not understand what it is

that makes you wish to marry me. We should be very unhappy together—I am quite sure of that.”

“Ah! no, Bride! Do not speak so. Unhappy, and with you!”

“I should be very unhappy,” answered the girl steadily, “and you *ought* to be, Eustace, if you really knew what love meant.”

He looked at her in amaze; that *she* should be speaking to *him* of the nature of love with that look of divine compassion in her eyes was a thing altogether too strange and perplexing. Her very attitude and quiet composure told of a heart unruffled as yet by any touch of human passion, and yet she was turning upon him and rebuking him for his ignorance. It was she who broke the momentary pause, seeming almost to read his thoughts.

“You wonder how I know perhaps, but, ah! if you had seen my father and mother together you would have understood. If you had known what love there was between my mother and me, you would understand. Do not I know what love is? Ah! do I not? It is the power to lay bare the innermost sanctuary of your soul, and to know that you will be understood, helped, strengthened, comforted. It is the knowledge that thoughts too deep, and hopes too wonderful and mysterious for words are shared together, and can be whispered of together without being tarnished by the poor attempt to reduce them to speech; the consciousness that in everything we are in accord, that we are often thinking the same things at the same moment; the knowledge that the deeper and deeper we go the more and more sympathy and sweet accord there is between us; that not only are we one in opinion about temporal and changing things, but knit close, close together in soul and spirit as well, sharing the same faith, the same hope, the same love! Ah! Eustace! if you had known

such a love as that, you could never think that there would be happiness for you and me in linking our lives together!"

He stood silent, almost abashed, before her, marvelling alike at her eloquence and at the insight displayed of a union of spirit, of which Eustace was forced to admit that he had not thought. To win Bride as his wife, to set her up as his object of adoring love, had seemed all-sufficient to him hitherto. Now it suddenly dawned upon him that with such a woman as this, that would be but the travesty and mockery of happiness. She was right and he was wrong: without a deeper sympathy and love than any which had come into his philosophy as yet, marriage would be a doleful blunder. He would be no nearer to her than before—perhaps farther away. He must learn to share with her that inner and mystic life of which he saw glimpses from time to time when she opened out for a moment and showed him what lay below the calm surface of her nature. Either he must share that with her, or wean her away from it; replacing mysticism with philanthropy, fanaticism with practical benevolence, objective with subjective religion. One of those two ends must be accomplished before he could hope to win the desire of his heart. As he stood in the bright spring sunshine facing her, he became suddenly aware of that, and a new light leaped into his eyes—the light of battle and of resolve. He would win her yet, but it must be by slower steps than any he had contemplated hitherto. She was worthy of better things than becoming a mere dreamer and nunlike recluse. It should be his to lead her steps to surer ground, to show her that there was a higher Christianity than any of which she had hitherto dreamed. Not now—not all at once, but he would come again and begin upon a surer foundation. He looked into her eyes, and gently taking her hand before she had time to draw it away, he said quietly—

"Do not be afraid, Bride; I see that you judged more wisely than I. You are right and I am wrong, and I will go away and trouble you no more in the present; but the time will come when I shall return, and I trust that by slow and sure degrees we shall draw so closely together that you will no longer shrink from me in fear and trembling. You are very young, sweet cousin, and there are many things you have yet to learn. It is a beautiful thing, I doubt not, to hold commune in the spirit with the higher world; but we are set in our place here below for something I hold to be more truly noble than that. We are set in a world of sin and misery that we may gird our armour upon us and fight the battle with this sin and misery—fight it for our poor and afflicted brethren, as they cannot fight it for themselves. That is the true Christianity; that is the highest form of religious devotion. You can read it for yourself in your Bible—'True religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the widows and orphans in their affliction'—to be ministers, in fact, of mercy and blessing in any sphere, of which one is given as the type."

"Yes," answered Bride very softly, "and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

She looked straight at Eustace as she spoke, and he looked back at her, marvelling at the extraordinary depth and beauty of those dark eyes. He longed, as he had never longed before, to take her in his arms and hold her to his heart; but he knew that he must not, so with a great effort he restrained himself, and kept back the words of passionate love which rose to his lips.

"Yes," he answered steadily; "and for your sweet sake, Bride, I will strive to do even that—evil and full of temptation as my world is."

"Not for my sake, Eustace, not for my sake," she replied, with an earnestness he scarcely understood; "that

would be indeed a vain resolve. If you cannot yet strive in the power and might of the Risen and Ascended Lord, whom you deny, strive at least in the power of the right you own and believe in, though you know not from whence it comes."

He looked at her in some amaze.

"Why do you say I deny your Risen Saviour, Bride?"

"Because I heard you with your own lips do so, in effect if not in actual words. You spoke of His miracles as being ordinary gifts of healing exaggerated by the devotion of His followers; of the Transfiguration being a like delusion—men awakened from sleep seeing their Master standing in the glory of the sunrise, and mistaking the morning mists for other luminous figures beside Him. You said that the Resurrection had been accounted for by the theory that the Saviour did not die, but was taken from the Cross in a state of trance, from which He recovered in the tomb."

A flush mounted quickly into Eustace's face.

"You mistake me, Bride," he answered hastily. "We were discussing—Mr. St. Aubyn and I—some of the teachings of various philosophers and thinkers, and I was explaining to him how Paulus had extended to the New Testament the method which Eichhorn had applied to the Old. I was not defending the theory, but merely stating it as a matter of speculation amongst men of a certain school."

Bride looked at him intently.

"If that is so, I am thankful and glad; but I heard too much not to know very well where your sympathies and convictions lie. If you do not follow the impious teachings of this Paulus, you are very far along the road which does not lead to the Father's house. No, Eustace; let us talk no more of this—it is only painful to both. I shall never convince you; but I shall pray for you. And now farewell. I trust when next

we meet it will be without this sense of unutterable distance between us; but it must be you to change—for I never shall."

She turned and left him standing there in the sunshine. That same day Eustace took leave of Penarvon, and commenced his backward journey to London.





CHAPTER IX

THE WAVE OF REVOLT

FEGS! if theer's tu be a bobbery up tu Pentreath, us lads o' St. Bride's wunt be left owt on't!"

"Dashed if us wull! Wheer theer's fightin' and a fillyboo, theer's more'n hard knocks to be gotten. Us'll soon see what us can get by un!"

"Aw dally-buttons, that us wull! They du say as our Saul's theer in t' thick of un. But what's it awl about? Dost any o' yu know?"

The swarthy fishermen looked each other in the face with a grin, but nobody seemed ready with an answer.

"May'ap 'tis because the king's dead," suggested one.

"Naw, 'tidden that ezakally," objected another. "'Tis becos they Frenchers 'ave abin an' gone for tu 'ave a new bobbery ower theer—what the great folks calls a reverlooshon. They've a druv theer king over tu England: that's what 'as set all the lads ower heer in a takin' after theer roights."

"'Tidden theer roights theer a'ter," remarked a woman who was sitting hunched up in the chimney-corner of the hut where this confabulation was going on, "'tis other folks' goods they want. They thinks wheerever a bobbery be theer'll be gutterin' and guzzlin', and that's all they care for. You'd a best 'ave nowt tu du with un."

But this piece of advice was received with ridicule and disfavour.

"Ef theer be zo much as gutterin' and guzzlin' why shetten us be left behind? 'Tidden much of either us gets nowadays with those dashed customs-men always a'ter we. Crimminy! but us'll take our share ef zo be as theer's awght to be gotten. I've heerd tell theer be a real hollerballoo up tu Pentreath. I be agwaine to see un."

"Zo be I! Zo be I!" echoed in turn a dozen or more voices, and from the dim chimney-corner there only came a rough snort of disapproval.

"Go 'long wi' ye then. When the dowl's abroad 'twidden be in yer to bide tu home. Go 'long and help make the bobbery wusser. 'Tidden hurt I. But it'll be a poor-come-along-on't for some o' yu, I take it. Theer'll be trouble at St. Bride along on't."

The men hesitated for a moment, for the old woman who thus spoke had won the not too enviable reputation of being next door to a witch, and of reading or moulding future events—which, it was not altogether certain in the minds of the people. She was a lonely widow woman, but lived in one of the best cottages in the place, where she kept a sort of private bar, selling spirits and tobacco to the fishermen, and allowing them to make use of her sanded kitchen, where at all seasons of the year a fire was burning, as a place of resort where all the gossip of the place could be discussed. They never put two and two together in seeking to account for the occult knowledge possessed by the old woman respecting the private concerns of the whole community. She affected to be rather deaf, and therefore low-toned conversations were carried on freely in her presence. Old Mother Clat was quite a character in her way, and a distinct power in the fishing community of St. Bride.

But her advice was not sufficient to deter the bolder

spirits from taking part in the exciting scenes known to be passing in the country round them. At that moment England was passing through a crisis more perilous than was fully realised at the time. The sudden revolution in France, which had culminated in the abdication and flight of the king, the death of the English king, George the Fourth, at almost the same moment, and the whispers in the air that Belgium and other countries were about to imitate France, and rise in revolt against the oppression and tyranny of princes, acted in an extraordinary fashion upon the minds of the discontented population of this land. The long period of depression and distress, whilst it had ground down one section of the community to a state of passive despair, had aroused in others the spirit of insubordination and revolt. Like leaven in the loaf was this fermentation going on, greatly helped by the knowledge that the cause of the people was exercising the minds of many of the great ones of the land, and that in them they would find a mouth-piece if only they could succeed in making their voice heard.

Now when there is any great uprising in any one district, there is generally a local as well as a general cause of complaint; and in this remote West-Country district it was far less the question of reformed representation and the abolishment of certain grave abuses which was exercising the minds of the community than the fact that new machinery had recently been set up in some of the mills at Pentreath, and in some of the farmsteads scattered about the district; and the panic of the Midlands had spread down to the South and West, the people fully believing that this would be the last straw—the last drop of bitterness in their cup, and that nothing but absolute starvation lay before them unless they took prompt measures to defend themselves from the dreaded innovations.

The Midlands and North had set the example. Ever since the rising of the Luddites there had been more or less of disturbance in the manufacturing districts, where, of course, in the first instance the introduction of machinery did throw certain classes of operatives out of employment; and they were unable to realise that this would soon be more than made up to them by the increase of trade resulting from the improvement in the many complicated processes of manufacture. In the North the riots were on the wane. It was just beginning to dawn upon the minds of the more enlightened artisans, that if they would leave matters to take a peaceful course they would soon see themselves reinstated in the mills, where trade was growing more brisk and active than ever before. But away down in the remote West, any innovation was received with the greatest horror and aversion, and the people had heard just enough about their wrongs to be in that restless state when any sort of activity becomes attractive, and any uprising against authority appears in the light of an act of noble resistance to tyranny.

Pentreath was an ancient town, though a small one. It sent a member to Parliament, although the huge and fast-increasing towns of the North did not. Of late years it had become a small centre of manufacturing industry, the water-power there being considerable. There were two cloth-mills and one silk-mill, a paper manufactory, and another where soap and essences were made. One reason why the district round Pentreath was not feeling the general poverty and distress very keenly was that from the rural districts men who could not get employment upon the land could generally find it in the mills. But when almost at one and the same time improved machinery became introduced both into agriculture and manufacture, the sense of revolt was deeply stirred. A certain number of turbulent spirits had been simul-

taneously dismissed both from the farms and from the mills, and these two contingents at once banded together in somewhat dangerous mood to talk over the situation and their own private grievances, and to set about to find a remedy.

It was the Duke who first introduced the machinery into the neighbourhood, although he had dismissed no servant of his until three of his men were found tampering with and injuring the new machine, when he promptly sent them about their business. Their bad example was followed by others, and four more were summarily dismissed; whereupon the Duke let it be thoroughly understood that any servant of his taking that line would be promptly discharged, but that he had no intention of dismissing any of those on his estate who were orderly and obedient, and used the improved implements in a right and workmanlike way. This declaration had the effect at Penarvon of stopping depredations for the moment, and no more labourers were sent away; but those who had already received notice were not taken on again: for the Duke, though a just and liberal master, was a stern upholder of law and order, and had no intention of having his will or his authority set at naught by a handful of ill-conditioned fellows, who refused to listen to any other guides than their own blind passions.

These men gravitated naturally into Pentreath, in the hope of finding employment there, only to be met by the news that the mills were turning off hands, owing to the saving of labour by the introduction of improved machinery. The band of what in these days would be termed "unemployed" gathered together by common accord, and roved the streets by day, begging and picking up odd jobs of work as they could get them, and meeting at night in a low tavern on the outskirts of the town to spend their pittance generally on raw spirit, and to talk sedition and treason.

Possibly, had no other power been at work just at that juncture, the whole thing might have begun and ended in talk ; but there were other forces in operation, all favourable to the spirit of revolt and vengeful hatred which actuated this small band ; and as discontented men of every class draw together by common consent, however various their grievances may be, so did the newly aroused politicians of the place, eager and anxious to awaken the country to a sense of its political grievances, and the urgent need of parliamentary reform, gravitate towards the little band of discontented labourers and operatives, sure of finding in them allies in the general feeling of revolt against the prevailing system, which they had set themselves to amend, and hoping quickly to arouse in them the patriotic enthusiasm which kindled their own hearts.

Saul's friend the cobbler was the first to address these men on the subject of the hoped-for reform. He went to them upon several evenings, strove to arouse in them a sense of indignation against prevailing abuses and evils, and found his task an easy one. Wherever he made out that the country was suffering from the oppression of tyrants and the greed of the rich, he was received with howls of approval and delight. The answer of his audience was invariably a cry of "Down with it! Down with them!" They would have rushed with the greatest pleasure through the streets, and attacked the houses of the mill-owners, or have broken into the mills and gutted them, had there been any to lead them. But the cobbler was a man of words rather than of action. He was one to foster fierce passions, but his talents did not lie in directing the action which follows upon such an arousing. One Sunday afternoon, it is true, he headed a procession which marched through the streets, shouting and threatening, so that the people shut their shutters in haste, and begged that the watchmen or the military might go out and disperse the mob. No harm, how-

ever, came of the demonstration, save that an uneasy feeling was aroused in the minds of the townfolk, who looked askance upon the haggard men seeking alms or employment about their doors, and were less disposed to help them than they had been at first.

Thus the ill-feeling between class and class grew and increased, and it was to a band of men rendered well nigh desperate by misery and a sense of burning wrong that Saul came down one Sunday, his own heart inflamed by passion and hatred, to supplement the efforts of the cobbler by one of his own harangues, which had already won for their author a certain measure of celebrity.

Saul had greatly changed during the past six months, changed and developed in a remarkable manner. When he stood by the orchard wall making love to Genefer Teazel, he had looked a very fine specimen of his race, and superior in many points to the labourers with whom he consorted, and whose toil he shared; but since the rapid development of his mental faculties had set in, he had altered wonderfully in his outward man, and no one to look at him would believe, save from his dress and the hardness of his hands, that he had spent his life in mere manual toil on a farm. His face, always well-featured, had now taken an expression of concentration and purpose, seldom seen in a labouring man; the eyes were very intense in their expression, and, as the fisher-folk were wont to say, went through you like a knife. His tall figure had grown rather thin and gaunt, as though the activity of the mind had reacted on the body, or else that he had been denying himself the needful support for his strong frame. He looked like a man whom it would not be well to incite to anger. There was a sufficient indication in his face of suppressed passion and fury held under firm control, yet ready to blaze up into a fierce life under provocation.

He looked like a man born to be an Ishmaelite in his life's pilgrimage—his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him—a man in revolt against the world, against society, against himself. A keen and yet sympathetic physiognomist could hardly study that face without a sigh of compassion. Saul Tresithny, with his nature, his temperament, his antecedents, could scarcely have any but an unhappy life—unless he had been able to yield himself in childlike submission to the teachings of his grandfather, and look for peace and happiness beyond the troublous waves of this world, to the far haven of everlasting peace.

Saul had spent the past six months in close reading and study, whenever time and opportunity were his. First from his friend the cobbler, then from his friend the Duke's heir, he had received books and papers; and out in the fields in his dinner-hour, or trudging to and fro with the plough, or up in his attic at night, with his companions snoring around him, he had studied and read and thought—thought till it seemed often as though thought would madden him, read until he looked haggard and wan from his long vigils, and he found the best part of his pittance of wage go in the purchase of the rushlights by which he studied his books at night. Eustace had lent him histories of other nations—down-trodden peoples who had revolted at last from their oppressors, and had won for themselves freedom—sometimes of body, sometimes of mind, at the sword's point. Eustace had tried to choose writers of impartiality; but his own bias had been too strong to make him a very good director of such a mind as Saul's; and when a man of that temperament reaches passages which are not to his liking, he simply skips over them till he reaches what is more to his taste; and Saul had invariably missed out those explanatory and exculpatory pages, wherein the historian shows the other side of

the question, and explains how some of the grievances most declaimed against by an oppressed people are the result rather of circumstance, and the changing order of the day, than the direct outcome of a real injustice and tyranny.

So his mind rapidly developed in a fashion by no means desired by his mentor; and so soon as the restraining influence of Eustace was removed, the wild and ardent imagination of the young man had full sway, and he had none to give him better counsel or strive to check the hot intemperance of his great zeal. He avoided his grandfather, and Abner was too wise to force his company where it was not wanted. He would not speak to Mr. St. Aubyn when the latter found him out, and sought, in his gentle and genial way, to get the hot-headed youth, of whom much talk was going about, to make a friend of him, and open out upon the subjects of such moment to all the country. No; Saul maintained a rigid and obstinate silence; and the Rector went away disappointed, for he feared there were evil days in store for Saul. Farmer Teazel, who was a staunch old Tory, and an ardent believer in the existing state of things, even though he admitted times to be bad in the immediate present, had no manner of patience with his new-fangled notions, that were, as he said, "driving honest folks crazy." He had winked at Saul's conduct as long as he could, valuing the many sterling qualities possessed by the young man, and hoping every day that he would turn over a new leaf. But his patience had long been sorely tried. Saul, not content with haranguing the fisher-folk down in the hamlet, who were always ready to imbibe any sort of lawless doctrine—their one idea being that the law and the customs were one and the same, and that to revolt against any existing order was a step towards that freedom of traffic which was their idea of prosperity and happiness. Not that they wished the excise duties withdrawn—for

that would render abortive their illicit traffic ; but they always fancied that there was advantage to be gained from stirring up strife and revolting against established order, and were eager listeners to Saul's speeches. But not content with that, Saul was working might and main amongst the more placid and bovine rustics, his fellow-labourers on the farm, to emulate the fisher-folk in their restless discontent, and with this amount of success, that when Farmer Teazel, in imitation of his noble landlord, introduced with pride and delight a new and wonderful machine into his own yard, his own men rose in the night and did it some fatal injury, which cost him pounds to repair, as well as delaying for a whole month the operations which it had especially been bought to effect.

This was too much. The farmer was in the main a placid man and a good-tempered one ; but he could not stand this, and he well knew whom he had to thank for the outrage. Whether or no Saul had prompted the men to do the mischief mattered little. It was he who had fostered in them the spirit of disobedience and self-will which had been at the bottom of the outrage ; and so long as he remained on the place there was no prospect of things being better. Before his anger had had time to cool, he summoned Saul, and a battle of words ensued, which led to the summary dismissal of the young man, whilst the farmer strode out of the kitchen, in which the interview had taken place, in a white heat of rage and disappointment.

Saul stood looking after him with a strange gleam in his eyes, and then his eyes caught sight of Genefer crouching in a corner with her hands over her face.

Saul had not thought much of Genefer all this while, as presumably she had been well aware ; but the sight of her distress touched him, and he would have approached her to offer some rude sympathy, had she not suddenly sprung up and faced him with blazing eyes and a

fury only second to that which her father had displayed.

In the emphatic and most idiomatic vernacular, which is always used by natives in moments of excitement, she told Saul *her* opinion of him and of his conduct; she let loose in a flood all the mingled pique, anger, disappointment, and jealousy which his conduct of the past months had inspired. That he should presume to ask her love, and then care for nothing but wild notions that savoured to her of the devil himself, and which all right-minded people reprobated to the last extent, was an insult she could not put up with. Woman-like, she had looked to stand first and to stand paramount with handsome Saul, when once she had permitted him to woo her; and instead of this, he had heeded her less and less with every week that passed, and had even refused to remain on Sunday at the farm when she had asked it as a favour; and at last had done this mischief to her father through his mischievous, ill-conditioned tongue. She would have none of him, no, not she! He might go to his friends the fisher-folk, or to the slums of Pentreath for a wife, if he wanted one!—she would have none of him! He had been false to her, he had treated her shamefully, and now he might go. She never wished to see him again! And bursting into tears (the almost invariable climax to an outburst of anger with women of her class) Genefer rushed from the room, and Saul, looking white about the lips, but with a blaze in his eyes which made all who met him shrink away from him, put together the few things he had at the farm besides his books, and stalked away into Pentreath, where he found an audience as ready to listen to him as he was to address them.

And this is how it came about that St. Bride was set in a ferment of excitement by the news that there were exciting scenes going on at Pentreath—mysterious outbreaks of popular fury—machines broken in the mills—

a statue of the old king standing in the market-place, found in the river-bed one morning greatly shattered by the fall—a baker's shop looted in broad daylight another day; and over all a sense that there was more to come, and that this was but the beginning of what might grow to rival one of the great risings of the Midlands and the North, when private houses had been broken into, and an untold amount of damage inflicted upon rich men, who had drawn upon themselves the popular hatred.

Now St. Bride, as represented by the fishermen, had no wish to be left out of any enterprise which promised either excitement or reward. It was whispered in all quarters that Saul was at the head of the rioters, and that his was the master-mind there. If so, they would be certain of a welcome from him if they joined his little band; and so it came about that, whilst the boats still lay high and dry upon the beach, the men of the place were almost all mysteriously missing, and their women-folk professed absolute ignorance as to what had taken them off.

"Oh, Mr. St. Aubyn," said Bride, with tears in her eyes, as she encountered the clergyman of St. Erme on the downs, bent in the same direction as herself, to the cottage where a sick woman was lying, "do you think it is true what they are all saying, that Abner's grandson is gathering together a band of desperate men, and intends to try and provoke a general rising, and to march all through the district, breaking machines and robbing and plundering? It seems too dreadful to think of; but wherever I go I hear the same tale. Do you believe that it is true?"

"I trust that you have heard an exaggerated account of what is passing, Lady Bride," he said; "though I fear that there are troublous days before us; but I think we are prepared for that, and can look without over-much dismay around. Remember, my child, that when we see

the beginning of these things coming to pass, we are to lift up our heads, because our redemption draweth nigh. In that is our safeguard and our hope."

The light flashed into Bride's eyes.

"Ah! thank you for reminding me. It is so hard to keep it always in mind; but indeed it is like the beginning—men's heart's failing them for fear, and for looking after those things that are coming on the earth. Mr. St. Aubyn, tell me, *are* the people altogether wrong in demanding redress of those grievances which lie so heavy upon them? Is it right that they should have so little, so very little voice in the government of the nation, when we call this a free and a constitutional form of government? Need we condemn them altogether for doing what their ignorance and misery drive them to do? Are we not also to blame in that they are so miserable and ignorant?"

"In very truth we are, Lady Bride——"

"Ah! no; not *Lady* Bride to you, when we are alone like this," she pleaded. "It never used to be so. Let it be Bride again, as though I were a child. Ah! would that I were, and that *she* were with me! Oh, it is all so dark and perplexing now!"

"It is, my child, it is, even for the best and wisest on the earth. Let us take comfort in the thought that it is light with God, and that He sees the working out of His eternal purposes, even where most let and hindered by the sin and opposition of man. A time of darkness is upon us—that none can deny—not in this land alone, but in all the lands of Christendom; and you are right in your feeling that it is not the ignorant masses who are alone in fault. We—the Church—the nobility, the great ones of the earth, have failed again and again in our duties towards those below them, and now they have to suffer. Two wrongs do not make one right, and the method in which the ignorant seem like to set to work is not only

foolish, but sinful also; and in our sense of sympathy for the people and our self-reprobation, we must not palliate, even though we may partially understand the cause of the sin. It is right that the people should be thought of and rightly done by. God has taught us that again and again; but it is not the ordinance of God that the people should govern—and yet, if I read my Bible and interpret aright, that is what we shall come to in the days of the end; it will no longer be the voice of God, nor yet the voice of the king which will prevail, but the voice of the people; and we shall again hear in newer and more subtle forms that word of blasphemy which tells us that the voice of the people is the voice of God.”

“Ah! do you think so? That is what I have heard said; but surely it will take long, very long, to accomplish?”

“Perhaps; I know not. In France it was accomplished in a few terrible years. Methinks in this land, where God has been so gracious times and again, it may be differently done and with less of terror and bloodshed; but the end will assuredly be the same. One can see, even from a worldly aspect, how it will be accomplished. Men say, and with justice and truth, that there should be in the community, for the good of all, a fair class representation—that is, that each class should have such a voice in the discussion of the affairs of the nation as will secure for that class the meed of justice and consideration to which its position entitles it. At present this is not so. The rising and important middle class have almost no representation, and the labouring and artisan class none. Yet they have a stake in the country, and are entitled to a voice.”

“That is what Eustace says, and it sounds right.”

“It is right, according to my ideas of justice, and will be gradually accomplished, as you know, by extension of franchise and so forth. We need not discuss that theme

now. What I mean to point out to you is the danger that threatens us in the future. From claiming a fair class representation as the basis of sound government, the next step will be the theory that every man—or at least every householder—should have a vote, and most plausible reasons will be given for this. Probably in time it will be carried into law, and then you will see at once an end of class representation as well as of fair constitutional government. The power will no longer be balanced. It will all be thrown into the hands of one class, and that the most numerous but the least educated, the least thoughtful, the least capable of clear and sound judgment, because their very conditions of life preclude them from study and the acquisition of the needful knowledge requisite for sound government. The power will be vested in the class the most easily led or driven by unprincipled men, by the class with the least stake in the country, and the least power of seeing the true bearing of a measure which may be very plausible, but absolutely unsound. It may take the people very long to find their power, and perhaps longer still to dare to use it; but in time both these things will be achieved, and then the greatness of England will be at an end; and, as I think, the state of misery and confusion which will ensue will be far, far greater than what she has endured beneath the sway of her so-called tyrants and oppressors.”

Bride heaved a long sigh.

“Eustace would not think that,” she remarked softly.

“No, nor many great men of the day; and time has yet to show whether they are right, or an old parish priest who has been buried alive all his days and knows nothing, as they would argue, of the signs of the times;” and here Mr. St. Aubyn smiled slightly. “Well, well, God knows, and in His good time we shall know. For the present that must content us. Let us not be in haste to condemn. Let us be patient, and full of faith and hope.

He has always pointed out a way of escape for His faithful servants and followers before things become too terrible for endurance. Our hope no man can take from us. Let us live in its heavenly light, and then shall we not be confounded at the swelling of the waters and the raging of the flood—those great waters of the latter days—supporting the beast and his scarlet rider, which are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues, the power of a great and lawless democracy.”

Bride looked awed and grave, yet full of confidence and hope; but the conversation was brought to a close by their arrival at the cottage whither both were bound.





CHAPTER X

A STRANGE NIGHT

IT was a sultry August night, and Bride felt no disposition for sleep. She had acquired during her mother's long illness the habit of wakefulness during the earlier hours of the night, when she was frequently beside the sick-bed, ministering to the wants of the patient. Since death had robbed her of that office, she had fallen into the habit of spending the earlier hours of the night in meditation and prayer, together with a study of the Scriptures; and to-night, after her old nurse had brushed out her abundant hair, and arranged it for the night, and after she had exchanged her dress for a long straight wrapper which was both cooler and more comfortable, she dismissed the old servant with a few sweet words of thanks, and setting her windows wide open to the summer night, knelt down beside the one which looked out over the moonlit bay, and was soon lost to all outward impression by her absorption in her own prayerful meditations.

The hour of midnight had boomed from the clock-tower before she moved, and then she was aroused less by that sound than by a gradual consciousness that there was in the sky, to which her eyes were frequently raised, a glow that was not of the moon, but was more ruddy in tone, and seemed to absorb into itself the softer and whiter light. As she remarked this, her

thoughts came back to earth again, and rising from her knees, she leaned out of the window, and then crossed the room hastily towards that other window looking away in the direction of Pentreath, and then at once she understood.

A tall column of fire arose from behind the belt of woodland which hid the distant town, a beautiful but awful pillar of fire, reaching up as it seemed to the very heavens, and swaying gently to and fro in the light summer breeze. For a few moments Bride stood gazing at it with eyes in which pain and wonderment were gathering, and then a stifled exclamation broke from her lips.

"God forgive them!—that is the work of incendiaries!"

She stood rigid and motionless a few moments longer, and then with rapid fingers she began unfastening her wrapper, and clothing herself in one of her dark walking dresses. Her heart was beating fast and furiously. Her face was very pale, for she was taking a resolution that cost her a great effort; but she seemed to see her duty clearly mapped out before her, and she came of a race that was not wont to shrink from the path of duty because the road was rough.

Few knew better than did Lady Bride Marchmont the temper of the rude fisher-folk of St. Bride's Bay. From her childhood she had been wont to accompany her mother down to that cluster of cottages and hovels which formed the little community, and she had grown up with an intuitive understanding of the people, and their ways and methods of thought, which had been matured and deepened by her many talks with Abner. She knew full well that, although in the main kindly men individually, there was a vein of ferocity running through the fibre of their nature, which a certain class of events always awoke to active life. Thirty years back

these men, or their fathers, were professionally wreckers, and it had needed long patience, and all the gentle influence of the Duchess and her helpers, to break them of this terrible sin. Of late years deliberate wrecking had to a very great extent died out, but there was still in the hearts of the fishermen an irradicable conviction that when "Providence" did send a vessel to pieces on their iron-bound coast, the cargo of that vessel became their lawful prey; and they were careless enough, in striving to outwit the authorities and secure the booty, of any loss of human life which might have been averted by prompt measures on their part. They made it rather a principle than otherwise to let the crew drown before their eyes without any attempt at rescue. When the crew were saved, they had a way of claiming the contents of the ship if any came ashore, and that was a notion altogether foreign to the ideas of the fishermen of St. Bride.

The same instinct of plunder awoke within them when any misfortune occurred in the neighbourhood; and wherever there was booty to be had for the taking, there were the hardy fisher-folk of the place likely to be found. Bride realised in a moment that if they saw the glow of this fire, and understood its meaning as she did, they would set off at once to join the band of marauders and incendiaries; and as every addition to such a band brings a fresh access of lawlessness and a growing sense of power, the very fact of the arrival of this reinforcement was likely enough to result in fresh outrage, and fresh scenes of destruction and horror.

Whilst standing rigid and silent, watching that terrible pillar of flame, Bride had turned the matter over in her mind, and resolved upon her own course of action. She knew the fishermen well, and knew their nature—at once soft and passionate, gentle and ferocious. Were

she to alarm the household and get her father to send down a number of the servants to try and stop them by force from marching to join the riot, she knew that nothing but fighting and disaster would ensue. There was a long-standing and instinctive feud between the servants of the castle, many of whom were not natives of the place, and the rugged fisher-folk of the bay. The servants despised the fishermen, and the fishermen hated the servants. No good could possibly result from such a course of action. But Bride knew every man amongst them. She had gone fearlessly in and out of their houses since childhood. She had sailed in their boats on the bay, she had visited their wives in sickness, and had clothed their children with the work of her own hands. They loved her in their own rough way. She knew that well, and she was a power in their midst, as her mother had been before her. They might be stayed by her pleading words, when no attempt at force would do more than whet their desire after battle and plunder. If she went alone, she had a chance with them; if she stayed to get help, all would be lost.

Her resolution was taken in less time than it has taken to read these lines. Donning her plainest dress and cloak, and softly summoning from the anteroom a great hound, who was the invariable companion of her lonely walks, she opened another door into one of the turreted chambers of the castle, and found her way down a spiral staircase, lighted by broad squares of moonlight from unclosed windows, to a door at the base, the bolts of which she drew back easily—for this was her own ordinary mode of access to the gardens—and found herself out in the soft night-air with the moon overhead, and that glow in the sky behind her which told such a terrible tale of its own. There were two ways from the castle to the fishing-village lying out of sight beneath the shelter of the cliff. One was the long and roundabout way of

the zigzag carriage-drive, leading through the grounds and out by the lodge upon the road, from which a byelane led down to the shore. The other was a far shorter, but a rough and in some seasons a perilous track—a narrow pathway formed by a jutting ledge of rock, extending by one of nature's freaks from a little below the great terrace in front of the castle right round the angle of the bluff, and so to St. Bride's Bay itself. A long, long flight of steps led down from the sea-terrace of Penarvon to the beach below, where the castle boats lay at anchor, or were housed within their commodious boat-house, according to weather and season; and from one spot as you descended these steps a sure-footed person could step upon the ledge of rock which formed the pathway round the headland. Bride was familiar from childhood with this path, and had traversed it too often and too freely to feel the smallest fear now. The moonlight was clear and intense. She knew every foot of the way, and even the hound who followed closely in her wake was too well used to the precarious ledge to express any uneasiness when his mistress led the way down to it.

With rapid and fearless precision Bride made the transit round the rocky headland, and saw the waters of the bay lying still and calm at her feet. The ledge of rock sloped rapidly down on this side of the bluff, and very quickly Bride found herself quite close to the hamlet, which lay like a sleeping thing beneath the sheltering crags. Her heart gave a bound of relief. All was still as yet. Perhaps the men had not realised what was passing, and were all at home and asleep. She paused a moment, reconnoitring, wondering whether she would do better to go forward or back. But the sight of a light shining steadily in one window, and a shadow passing to and fro within the room it lighted, convinced her that something was astir, and decided her to go on. She knew the cottage well. It was that of the old woman who

went by the name of Mother Clat. Bride knew that if any mischief were afoot, she would be the first to know it; nay, it was like enough it would be hatched and discussed beneath her very roof. Even now the worst characters of the place, the boldest of the men, and those most bent on riot and plunder, might be gathered together there; but the knowledge of this probability did no deter Bride, who had all the resolute fearlessness of her race and temperament; and she went composedly forward and knocked at the outer door.

"Coom in wi' ye," answered a familiar voice, and Bride lifted the latch and entered.

A fire of peat turves glowed on the open hearth, over which a pot was hanging; but the room was empty, save for the old woman herself, who gazed in unaffected amaze at the apparition of the slim black-robed girl with her white face and shining eyes.

"Loramassy! ef it ban't t' Laady Bride hersen! Mercy on us! What's brought she doon heer at such a time! My pretty laady, you 'a no beznez out o' your bed sech a time as this. You shudden 'ave abin an' gone vor tu leave t' castle to-night!"

"Why not?" asked Bride, coming forward towards the fire, and looking full at the woman, who shrank slightly under the penetrating gaze. "What is going on abroad to-night, Mother Clat? I know that something is?"

"Fegs! I'm thinking the dowl himsel's abroad these days," answered the woman uneasily. "The bwoys are that chuck vull o' mischief. Theer's no holdin' un when 'e gets un into 'is maw. It du no manner o' gude to clapper-claw un. 'T on'y maakes un zo itemy's a bear wi' a zore yed."

"Where are the men?" asked Bride quietly. The woman eyed the girl uneasily and not without suspicion, but the expression of her face seemed to reassure her.

"Ye dwawnt mean no harm to the bwoys ef so be as I tellee?" she answered tentatively.

"No, indeed," answered Bride earnestly. "I want to keep them from harm all I can. I am so terribly afraid they are running into it themselves. I hoped I should be in time to stop it. Oh, I fear I am too late!"

"Crimminy!" ejaculated the old woman, with admiration in her voice and eyes, "ef yu came to try an' stop they bwoys from mischief, yu are a righy bold un!—that yu be! But 'tidden no use tu argufy widden. I did go for tu try mysen: but twarn't no use. Et gwoeth agin the grain o' men-folk tu listen tu a woman—let alone a bit of a gurl like yu, my laady."

"I think they would have listened to me if I could have found them in time," said Bride softly, with a great regret in her eyes. "You mean they have all gone off to join the rioters over at Pentreath?"

"They've abin tu Pentreath ever sin' yestereen. Yu've coom tu late, my pretty laady. Du ee go back now. 'Tidden no place for yu heer. What ud his Graace say ef he heard you was tu St. Bride's at this time o' night?"

The woman was so manifestly uneasy that the girl suspected something, though she knew not what. As she stood looking into the fire, Mother Clat still urging her to be gone, it suddenly occurred to her that possibly the rioters had other plans than those whispered designs against the mills of Pentreath. Had not her own father angered one section of the community by the introduction of machinery upon the land? And when the spirit of revolt was aroused and well whetted by scenes of outrage, might not one lead to others?

Looking straight at the old woman with the grave direct glance which made this girl a power sometimes with those about her, she asked clearly and steadily—

"Do you mean that you are expecting the men back? that they are bent on doing mischief here? Do

not try and deceive me. It is always best to speak the truth."

The old woman cowered before the girl, as she never cowered in the midst of the rude rough men, even when they were in their cups, and threatened her with rough ferocity.

"Yu nidden be glumpy wi' I," she half whimpered, "I an't adued nawt but try to keep un back. I twold un it ud coom tu no gude. They'd better letten bide. But I be terrabul aveared they means mischief. It's awl along o' that Zaul. He've abin arufyin', and aggin' un on, and now they du zay as 'e's leadin' un the dowl on'y knaws wheer; and they're fair 'tosticated wi't all!"

Bride started a little, as though something had stung her, and a look of keen pain came into her face.

"Saul," she said softly, "Abner's boy! Ah! what a sorrow it will be for him! And that is Eustace's doing! It was he who is responsible, not the poor hot-headed youth himself. O Eustace! Eustace! will you ever see the danger of the path you are treading, and the peril into which you are leading others?"

The woman was loth to speak at first, but the charm of Bride's gentleness, and her absolute sense of security in the goodwill of the young lady, overcame her reticence at last, and she told the girl all she knew. It was not much; but she had gathered from some news that reached her at dusk that she might expect a party sometime in the small hours of the morning, who would stand in need of refreshment, but would pay her well for her trouble. Reading between the lines of the message, she had got a shrewd notion that the marauders under Saul Tresithny would pay a visit to the neighbourhood of St. Bride's that night, and it might be presumed that the Duke's new machinery might suffer in consequence. This was by no means certain, however. The Duke was known to take precautions not possible for

smaller farmers with fewer servants and less issue at stake, and it might be that the attack would be made upon the smaller men, who would less easily recoup themselves for the loss. Of that the woman knew nothing; as a matter of fact, she did not know, but only guessed, that an attack might be made at all. She had soon come to an end of such information as she possessed, and Bride was left to consider what she ought to do under the circumstances.

Should she go home and rouse her father's men? or would that only bring about the very collision she so much wished to avoid? Was the information received sufficient for her to act upon, or had it originated with the woman herself, who was evidently not in the confidence of the men? Musing for a few moments over this question, Bride made a quick resolve, and after saying a brief but kindly farewell to Mother Clat, who was anxiously studying her face all the while, she slipped out of the cottage, and along the silent little street of the village beneath the cliff, till she found herself upon the bit of rough road which led upwards from the shore, through a narrow gully, towards the church and the rectory.

Bride knew the habits of Mr. Tremodart. He was seldom in bed before one or two o'clock in the morning. He was a man of eccentric ways, and almost invariably after his supper at half-past eight, sat down to smoke in one of his untidy rooms, and at ten o'clock started out on a long walk over the moors or along the cliffs, coming home about midnight, and sitting up with a book for an hour or two later. It was not much after one o'clock now, and she had good hopes of catching him before he retired. With all his peculiarities, and his lack of the spirituality that was to Bride as the breath of life, the Cornishman was a shrewd, hard-headed man, with a large fund of common-sense, and a wide experience of

St. Bride's folks and their ways. He would be by far the best person to acquaint with the danger of the hour. He was (as was usual in those days) magistrate as well as clergyman, had a secular as well as sacred charge over his people. To her great relief, as she unlatched the garden-gate, she saw him standing out in his untidy plot of ground and looking at the red light in the sky. As her light footfall fell upon his ear, he turned with a start, and his face expressed a great amazement when he saw who had come to disturb his solitude at such an hour.

"Lady Bride! Will wonders never cease! And what are yu doing out here alone at this time of night, my child? It is hardly fit yu should be abroad with no protector but your dog. Is anything amiss at home? And why did yu not send rather than come?"

In a few words Bride told the story of her evening's vigil and its result, the clergyman standing and looking down at her in the moonlight, and making patterns on the gravel with the point of his stick.

"The foolish lads! the foolish, wrong-headed lads! they will bring mischief on their heads one of these days, I take it. Well, well, well, it is perhaps less their fault than those who egg them on, and puzzle their heads by half-truths. Dear, dear, we must stop the mischief if we can. I wonder now where they are like to go first. To the Duke's, think you, Lady Bride? 'Twas he who first brought in this new machinery, and there would be most glory in destroying his property, as they would think it, poor misguided souls!"

"Yes, but they know my father's men have firearms, and that the dogs are left loose in the great yard where the machines are kept, and that there is always one man sleeping in the room by the great alarm-bell that was put up, who would rouse the whole castle if he heard any sound of attack."

"If they know that, they are hardly likely to be daring enough to try to injure his Grace's property," remarked Mr. Tremodart thoughtfully. "But there are several more in their black books—Farmer Teazel, for instance—and that misguided young Tresithny, whom *yu* say is at the head of all this, knows the place well, and would be able to lead them to it."

"Oh, I cannot believe it of Saul!" cried Bride, with a note of pain in her voice, "to turn into a leader of cowardly mobs, after the teaching and the training he has had! It doesn't seem possible; yet I fear it is too true. And it is, I fear, the doing of my cousin Eustace. Oh, it seems too sad that we should first lead them on to riot, and then sit in judgment upon them for what we have taught them to do."

"I must see if I cannot stop this before it has come to a matter for the magistrates," said Mr. Tremodart, with a firm look upon his face; "if things go too far, it becomes a hanging matter for the ringleaders—examples are made, and the people intimidated by the hanging of those who lead them. We must not let Abner's grandson finish his life upon the gallows if we can help it. So come with me, Lady Bride; I will see you to the gate of your home, and then go and meet these lads if they do pay us a visit. They will most likely take the direct road for some distance, and the night is very still. I think I shall find them out by the tramp of their feet. I have good ears for sound."

Bride knew that, and walked rapidly by his side up the steep road trending upwards towards the castle; but when the lodge gate was reached, and he would have opened it for her, she paused and placed her hand upon his arm.

"I cannot," she said; "I must go on. I must see the end of this. Indeed, I shall get no harm. Nobody will lay a finger on me. No, do not refuse me; do not think

me self-willed, but I must go with you. Something within me tells me I must. Mr. Tremodart, it has been the doing of a Marchmont that Saul Tresithny and these poor ignorant fishermen are abroad with evil intent to-night. You must not hinder me from striving to do my share to avert the threatened danger, and I know I shall not be hurt. You will be with me, and no one will lay a finger on either of us. They may not listen to us; but they will not hurt us. Our West-Country men are not savages."

Mr. Tremodart rubbed his chin and shook his head in some perplexity. He did not think the delicate girl was suited to the task in hand, and he rather feared what the Duke might say when this night's work came to his ears; but then it was very difficult for him to overcome the resistance of Lady Bride, whose rank and standing gave her an importance of her own quite independent of that exercised by her strong personality.

"I will tell my father that it was my own doing," said Bride quietly, observing his hesitation, and taking his arm, she led him onwards, he yielding the point, because he did not exactly know what else to do, having no authority over her to insist on her return.

The walk was a swift but silent one. The road lay white beneath their feet, and the moon, which was now sinking in the sky, threw long strange shadows over the world. The track grew rougher as it rose upon the down-land, but both were good walkers, and did not heed. The great hound paced silently behind them as they moved, till all at once it lifted up its huge head, and after sniffing the air suspiciously for a while, broke into a low deep bay.

At that sound both pedestrians stopped and listened intently, and in a few brief moments they heard a noise. It was not the sound of the measured tramping they

had expected first to hear, but rather that of voices—voices in confabulation or dispute, sometimes low and confused, sometimes rising higher and higher, as if in angry debate—the voices of a multitude, as was testified by the continual hum, in addition to the more distinct sounds of argument or strife. The moon just now had passed behind a cloud, and the moor was very dark, but Mr. Tremodart and Bride walked swiftly and silently forward, leaving the road for the soft grass, as they deflected their course, so as to come near to the spot where the colloquy was being held. Their footsteps made no sound, and Bride held the hound by the collar and hushed him into silence. Very soon they had approached near enough to hear what was passing, and to catch every word of a harangue being delivered in a voice which both of them knew only too well.

“I tell yu yu are cowards to think only of duing what is safest and easiest for yourselves. Are we fighting for ourselves, or for our miserable and oppressed brothers? Men, we are bound together in a great undertaking; and if we stand shoulder to shoulder in the fight, and are true tu ourselves and tu each other all over the land, no power can stand against us. We are bound together tu overthrow tyrants and oppressors—the great ones of the earth, who fatten upon our misery and grind us to the very dust. Those are our enemies, and all of yu know it as well as I. And now to-night, when the power is in our hands, are we to disgrace our cause by falling upon men only a little better off than ourselves, and wrecking their goods and bringing them to misery? No—I say no. I say that would be a coward act. And those who want to go to yon upland farm, and ruin a man who was once as one of us, till by his industry he raised himself to comfort, or his father before him, must go alone. I will not be with him. There is one man only in these parts upon whose goods I will lay a hand, and

that is the Duke of Penarvon. He is the type tu us of that wealth and power we are banded together tu overthrow, and I will lead yu on tu his place and lay down my life in the struggle with all joy. But I will knock down the first man who tries to go to the farm, and yu men in the crowd who owe the farmer a grudge and hound the rest on to attack him, yu best know whether or not I can keep my word !”

There was dead silence after this speech, which was evidently the culminating oration of a hot debate, and a voice from the crowd called out—

“Us ban’t agwain’ vur tu be a-killed by the Duke’s men an’ their guns—we’m had enough o’ guns. We’ll de dalled ef we du! Ef we can’t have a slap at t’old varmer’s ’chines, us’ll gwo home tu our beds. Be yu agwaine to take we theer or ban’t yu ?”

“I’ll not take yu tu the varm, nor yet stand by and zee yu gwo!” answered Saul hotly, lapsing from the dignity of speaker into that of a common disputer, and for a minute the battle raged again; but perhaps the crowd from Pentreath had about tired itself out, for there was no very determined resistance to Saul’s resolute opposition, and evidently no disposition in the mob to run the gauntlet of the Duke’s well-known and organised opposition to such attacks.

In the darkness of the night—darkest before the dawn—the crowd slowly melted away, slowly at first, but with considerable rapidity, as the men realised that they were hungry, and tired, and cold, and that many of them had plunder from the burning mill to secrete before the authorities came in search of them. Before the moon shone out again the mob had melted like snow before the sun, and Mr. Tremodart and Bride, whose figures seemed to rise up out of the very ground before the astonished gaze of one man left standing alone upon the moor, found themselves face to face with Saul Tresithny, who looked

in the white low moonlight as though confronted by veritable wraiths.

"Saul," said Bride, coming one step forward, "why do you hate my father so much? What ill has he ever done to you, or to any in St. Bride?"

The man made no attempt to reply, till the glance fixed full upon him seemed to draw the answer, but without his own volition.

"It is not he himself I hate," he said, speaking with difficulty, "it is the whole system he supports. He is one of the enemies of the cause of the people. He and all his class are barriers and bulwarks against our freedom. You do not understand; you could not. But we do, and Mr. Marchmont will tell you all, if you ask him. He knows. It is not the men themselves we hate, but the power they hold over us. We will not have it longer. We will break the yoke off our neck."

At this moment the sound of galloping horse-hoofs was heard along the soft turf, and the three standing in the moonlight saw a young officer of dragoons, followed by three mounted troopers, heading straight for them.

"That's the fellow!" cried the officer; "seize him, men, and make him fast. I thought we'd run him to earth here. That's your man. See he does not escape you!"





CHAPTER XI

DUKE AND DEFAULTER

BRIDE made three steps forward and stood beside the horse ridden by the young officer, the moonlight shining clear upon her, and adding to the pure pale character of her beauty.

"Captain O'Shaughnessy," she said gently, "I think you are making a mistake about this man."

In a second the young officer was off his horse and on his feet. He recognised the speaker now, although his astonishment at such an encounter at such an hour of the night—or rather morning, for the dawn would soon begin to break—was past all power of expression.

"Lady Bride!—Can it be you? or do I see a ghost?"

"No, it is I," answered the girl quietly; "I came out with our good clergyman, Mr. Tremodart, to see if we could persuade our foolish and misguided fishermen from St. Bride to come quietly home. We were afraid they were bent on mischief. But we only came up as the crowd was dispersing. Your prisoner there was refusing to permit an attack on the machinery at Farmer Teazel's, which the men were eager to make. That is why I say that I think you are making a mistake in arresting him."

The young officer, who had received hospitality from the Duke on occasion, as all the officers of the regiment

quartered near to Pentreath did from time to time, looked from his prisoner to the lady and from the lady to the prisoner in some perplexity, and then said doubtfully—

“Do you not think you are mistaken, Lady Bride? Was not the man urging them to make the attack?”

“No,” answered Bride at once. “He would have been willing to do so had they marched upon my father’s place, where there would have been a warm welcome for them, and hard fighting; but his followers were not prepared for that. They wished to go where there would be little or no resistance, and where they could effect their purpose with impunity. But your prisoner there threatened to knock down the first man who attempted such a thing, and his words had the effect of dispersing the crowd. As you yourself saw, he was alone when you came up. But for him, that dispersed crowd would have been in full march upon one of the nearest farms here. Are you arresting him for that?”

“Faith no!” answered the young man, evidently rather nonplussed by the lady’s story, and uncertain how to proceed. “Nevertheless this is the man, as I take it, whom I was sent out to capture. Is not your name Saul Tresithny?” he asked, turning towards the prisoner, who stood perfectly still and quiet between his guards, making no attempt at escape.

“Yes.”

“And you were leading the mob in Pentreath this night—helping to set fire to the mills?”

“I was with them part of the time,” answered Saul fearlessly.

“And you are the man who makes speeches that sends them all stark raving mad? I’ve heard of you, Saul Tresithny. I think it is high time you had a taste of prison discipline.”

“I do what I can for the cause of freedom,” answered

Saul, throwing back his head with a gesture that was rather fine. "I cry death to tyranny and tyrants wherever they be, but I'll have no hand in harming poor men's goods. If my men would have marched on the castle to-night, I'd have led them with all my best ability; but they had not the stomach for it—poor, ill-fed wretches—one can't wonder. Courage and starvation are not wont to walk hand in hand, so they melted away like a mist just before you came. But I am here, ready to lay down my life for the cause, if that will be any good to it."

The young officer shrugged his shoulders and turned back to the lady with a gesture that spoke volumes.

"There, Lady Bride, you see what kind of a temper that fellow has got; your pleadings are quite thrown away on such as he."

"He is only repeating what he has been taught, and that by those who should know better," pleaded Bride gently, yet earnestly. "Captain O'Shaughnessy, I have known that young man all my life, and until he was led away by the voice of this cruel agitation he bore the best of characters; and to-night he has dispersed a lawless mob by the strength of his own determination. Men are not punished for their intentions but for their deeds. He says he would have injured my father's property; but he did not do it. What he did do was all in the cause of law and order. Mr. Tremodart, tell Captain O'Shaughnessy what we saw and heard; then he will understand better that he is making a mistake about Saul."

"I can only testify that what you've said is the truth, Lady Bride. I can't say, of course, what the young man has been doing earlier on; but we came out to try and stop the boys of St. Bride from getting into mischief, which is a way they have when mischief is afloat; and we came upon the young fellow making a speech which

had the effect of sending them tu the right-about and dispersing them. That's all true as gospel; but whether yu are justified in letting your prisoner escape yu, I don't profess to judge. Yu should know your duty better than we can teach it yu."

"And I'm afraid my duty is to arrest him and take him back to Pentreath," said the young man regretfully. "Lady Bride, I don't like doing anything against your wishes, but my orders were to ride after the mob and disperse it, and capture Saul Tresithny if possible. I don't think I should be justified in letting him escape me after that—once having my hands upon him. You wouldn't wish me, I am sure, to fail in my own duty and obedience?"

The young fellow spoke almost pleadingly, and Bride's face changed. The soft eager light went out of her eyes, and was replaced by one of sadness and resignation.

"I must persuade no one to fail in duty and obedience," she said, with a sigh, "least of all one of his Majesty's soldiers. But will you remember all that I have spoken in his favour, and let it be known what he did to-night?"

"Faith and I will. I'll say everything I can in his favour—how he didn't resist us, but behaved as quietly and as well as possible, and had sent all the people to the right-about before ever we had got up to them. I'll say everything I know for him, poor fellow. For he'll need it—with the charges they'll bring against him."

The soldiers, at a sign from their superior, had walked the prisoner a little farther away, and Bride, looking anxiously into Captain O'Shaughnessy's face, asked, in a low voice—

"What charges will they bring?"

"Arson, for one thing," answered the young man

significantly. "You see, there's been a lot of damage done in Pentreath to-night, and it's pretty well known that Tresithny and another little cobbler fellow have been the stirrers-up of all this turbulence. They've got the cobbler fast enough; and now I've got Tresithny too. They'll be examined to-morrow before the magistrates, and most likely committed for trial. It's been a bad bit of business, and the country is getting exasperated with all this senseless rioting and destruction of property. They make signal examples now and again of ringleaders—just to try and deter others."

Bride turned very white in the dying moonlight.

"What do you think they will do to him?" she asked, in a low voice.

"Well, I can't say. I'll tell all you've told me, Lady Bride. I'll say what there is to say in his favour, for he's a plucky fellow, and deserves a better fate. He'd make an uncommon fine soldier, if he were only in the ranks now. But many men have been hanged for less than has been astir in Pentreath these past few days, and there's a strong feeling in the place against this fellow Tresithny."

Bride caught her breath a little sharply, but her voice was quite calm as she bowed her adieus to the young officer.

"Well, I must not detain you any longer, Captain O'Shaughnessy. I am grateful to you for telling me the truth, and for promising to befriend Saul Tresithny as far as you are able. You say he will be brought before the magistrates to-morrow—does that mean to-day? It is their day for sitting, I know."

"To-day! why, to be sure it is to-day," answered the young man, with a short laugh. "Good morning, Lady Bride. I must be off after my men. They have been out the best part of the night. I'll say all I can for that fellow Tresithny; but——"

He sprang on his horse, and the rest of the sentence, if it was ever finished, was lost on Bride. She took Mr. Tremodart's arm, and he felt that she was trembling all over.

"This has been too much for you, Lady Bride," he said, with his awkward gentleness. "I ought not to have let you come."

"It is not that," answered Bride, in a very low voice. "I am not tired; it is the thought of *that*. Oh, Mr. Tremodart, is it true?—can they hang him for it?"

"The magistrates cannot hang him," answered Mr. Tremodart; "and if he is committed for trial, several weeks will elapse before the assize comes on, and things may have happened to divert public attention; so perhaps the feeling against him will not be running so high. All those things make a great difference."

"But have they hanged men before for this sort of thing?"

"Yes—they have certainly done so."

Bride shuddered again. She spoke some words, as if to herself, in so low a voice that he could not catch them; but he thought he heard the name of Eustace pass her lips.

He shook his own head sorrowfully.

"I was afraid Mr. Marchmont was wrong in trying to stir up the people to be discontented and rebellious. He meant well—all those reformers mean well, and have a great deal on their side; but they go to work so often in the wrong way, and their followers make the blunder ten times worse. It's not easy to say out of hand how the thing should be done; but I take it they've not got hold of the right end of the stick yet."

The two walked with rapid steps, their thoughts keeping them silent for the most part. Bride's mind was hard at work; her feelings were keenly stirred within her. The burden of the song which kept ringing in her ears

was, "This is Eustace's doing, this is Eustace's work. Oh, how can we let another die, and die perhaps unfit and impenitent through his act, through his teaching? It must not be. Oh, it shall not be! Saul must not die through Eustace's fault!"

Bride had come to think of Eustace in a way she scarcely understood herself. She had not greatly liked him on his visit. For many weeks she had thought little of him, and later on, when she knew him better, she saw too much in him to disapprove to grow in any way dependent upon him. And yet since his departure she was conscious that he filled a good deal of her thoughts, that she felt a certain responsibility in his career, and that she was unable to help identifying herself with him in a fashion she could neither understand nor explain.

True he had made her an offer of marriage, and had professed an undying love for her. He had gone away half pledged to return and seek her again; and no woman can be utterly indifferent towards a man who loves her, especially when she is young, and has never known what it is to be wooed before. Bride had shrunk back in justifiable reproof when Eustace spoke of her as being the sun and star of his life, the elevating power which could raise him to what heights she would; but none the less did his words leave an impress on her sensitive mind, and gave her much food for reflection. She was too well taught, as well as too full of spiritual insight, to be confused by such an outburst, or to come to look upon herself as responsible for the soul of the man who had almost offered it to her to make what she would of; but she had begun to wonder what she might be able to do for him by prayer and unceasing intercession, and the thought was helping her to take a keener and more personal interest in any matter in which Eustace was concerned than would otherwise have been the case.

The dawn was breaking as Bride reached home, but she slipped up to her room unobserved. She was too worn out and weary to think any more just then; and slipping off her clothes and getting into bed, she fell into a deep sleep, which lasted till the attendant came to rouse her in the morning.

Refreshed by those few hours of dreamless sleep, but with her mind as full as before of the events of the past night, she rose and dressed, and found her way to the breakfast-room just as her father was entering.

The Duke's face was very stern. He had just heard of the riots in Pentreath. Mr. St. Aubyn had come half-an-hour earlier to speak to him on the matter. He was on his way to Pentreath, for both he and Mr. Tremodart, according to the prevailing custom of the day, were on the magisterial bench, and he often came in on his way to a sitting to consult the Duke on some point of law, or ask leave to look in his many and valuable books for some information on a knotty point. He was in the library at this moment, and the Duke was ordering some refreshment to be taken to him there, as he had no time to come to the breakfast-room.

When he saw his daughter, he greeted her with an air of abstraction; and as the two sat at table together, he told her in a few words the news which had reached him, and spoke of his own intention of accompanying Mr. St. Aubyn to Pentreath, in order to make personal inquiries and inspection as to the magnitude of the riot.

Bride listened in silence whilst he spoke; and then suddenly summoning up all her own courage (for she had all her life stood in considerable awe of her father), she told him in unconsciously graphic words the whole story of her night's adventure, and of the terrible peril now menacing Saul Tresithny.

The Duke listened in silence, but evidently the story

produced a profound impression on him. His eyes never moved from his daughter's face as she proceeded, and at the end he sat perfectly silent for a full three minutes before he put a sudden question—

“And why are you so keenly interested in the fate of this Saul Tresithny, Bride? What is he more to you than the cobbler, for instance, of whom Captain O'Shaughnessy spoke? Is it because he is a St. Bride man—Abner's grandson? Poor old Abner!—it will be a terrible blow to him!”

“I think it will kill him if Saul is condemned to death,” said the girl, with shining eyes. “Yes, papa, it is all that—I have known Saul ever since I can remember anything—ever since I was a tiny child, and he used to collect shells and seaweed for me, and make me boats to sail. But it is not that quite—it is not only that he belongs to our village, and that he is Abner's grandson. That would always make me interested in him, and dreadfully sorry if he got into trouble. But there is another and a much greater reason than that. Oh, papa! surely you know what it is!”

He was still looking at her earnestly. Little as Bride knew it, there was at this moment in her face a look of her mother which the Duke had never observed there before; her face was pale from her night's vigil, and from the stress of her emotion. Her dark eyes were full of a liquid light, reminding him painfully of the dying brightness of his wife's eyes as she gave him her last solemn charge. Even the note of appeal in the girl's voice had something of the mother's sweetness and softness. Bride *had* been growing increasingly like her mother during the past months—many people had observed it; but her father had never noticed it till now. Now the likeness struck him with a curious force, and Bride noted that he seemed arrested by her words as had seldom been the case before. But he made no verbal response, and she suddenly rose

and came over to him and knelt down at his feet, clasping her hands upon the arm of his chair, and turning her sweet, quivering, earnest face up towards him. Probably she would never have ventured upon this demonstration before her unapproachable father, had it not been that her sensitive spirit had received some instinctive consciousness of sympathy new between him and herself. He laid his hand now upon her clasped fingers, and the touch sent a quick thrill through her.

"Papa, Saul must not die!" she said, with intense earnestness of resolve. "He must not die a traitor's death, for the things he has done are not prompted by his own imaginings. The words he has spoken are not his own. It is Eustace who has done it all—Eustace who is the author of all. Oh, papa, the punishment must not fall on Saul's head. I think it would break Eustace's heart if he were to know that Saul had come to his death like that."

The Duke's face was very dark and stern, but his sternness was not for his child, as Bride knew by the pressure of the fingers upon her hand.

"Eustace should think of this before he sets about playing with explosives. Could he not see that young Tresithny was not a man to be stirred up with impunity? What a man sows, that shall he also reap."

"Ah! truly he does! Oh, papa, I fear me the harvest Eustace will have to reap will be a very bitter one; but, indeed, indeed Saul must not die for Eustace's fault. Eustace is our kinsman. He was here as our guest. We cannot altogether shirk the responsibility of his deeds. Papa, you will not let Saul die for what is the folly and sin of Eustace. Ah! no. You will save him, I know. You will save him, for the honour of the name of Marchmont!"

"What can I do, Bride? I have no power. I am not one of the magistrates."

"You are not a magistrate, but you have more power than any one in the county," answered Bride, with a smile so like her mother's, that the heart of the old man contracted first with pain, and then swelled with a sense of new happiness. "Eustace would perhaps call it an abuse, that one man should have so much power in his hands just because he had wealth and lands; but I do not think that. I hold that if he uses his power on behalf of true justice and true mercy, and in the cause of Christ, it can be a power of great good to be used for the glory of God and the blessing of man. *You* will use your power so, dearest father, will you not? Saul would have striven to do you hurt last night, not from any personal enmity, but because he has been wrongly taught by our own kinsman. You will go to-day and plead for him before his accusers, and show him that the rich do not hate and oppress the poor, that the great ones of the world can feel compassion and tenderness for those who are deceived and led away, and that in them, and not in those who raise the cry of hatred and bitterness, their friends are to be found."

The Duke was silent for several minutes, and Bride did not disturb him by so much as a word. He had laid his hand upon her head, and was looking into her eyes with a glance she could not understand. In very truth he was recalling the parting scene with his wife, the last charge she had given him before the hand of death had been laid upon those lips. It seemed to him as if now, all these months later, he was listening to the echo of those words; and a strange wave of tenderness swept over him, softening the hard lines of his face, and bringing into it something which Bride had scarcely seen there before.

"You would have me stand before our ministers of the law as the advocate of one who has been lawless, criminal, and the stirrer-up of sedition? Am I to appear

before our townfolks as the supporter of anarchy and arson ? ”

“ No, but of mercy and good-will towards the erring and deceived,” answered Bride, “ as the one man perhaps in the whole place who can so stand fearlessly forward on the side of mercy, when he is known to be held the greatest enemy to the public good, the bitterest enemy these poor misguided creatures have. They hold you to be the embodiment of all that is cruel and crushing—you will show them that you are their best friend. You will plead for them, their ignorance, their inability to see the falsity and folly of their teachers. You will show that Saul has hitherto led an honest and industrious life ; that till he was led away by the teachings of Eustace, he was one of the steadiest men in St. Bride. You will tell how he averted the attack on the farm last night, and strive to gain mercy for one who has been only blinded and maddened by others, and has within him the germs of so much that is good. It is a first offence. Surely you can gain mercy for him ! Oh, I do not know how to bear the thought that Saul may have to die for what is the fault of Eustace ! ”

The Duke sat very still, thinking deeply.

“ You hold the fault to be Eustace’s ? ”

“ Yes,” answered Bride, slowly and mournfully. “ Other causes may have helped, but Eustace set the ball rolling. He taught Saul discontent, as he has tried to teach it to others. He thinks that that is the first step towards trying to make men raise themselves. As Abner truly says, it is beginning at the wrong end ; but he cannot see that. If they would but be discontented with themselves first—with their sinfulness, with their vices—if they would rise higher by that repentance and cleansing which would purify their hearts, then there would be hope for them to rise in other ways. But to begin by stirring up all that is most selfish and wicked, all the anger, hatred,

and malice, which Christ came down to destroy and overcome—ah ! how can they look for good to come ? It never will and it never can.”

The Duke suddenly rose to his feet, for the clock had chimed the hour of ten.

“I must be going if I am to go,” he said. “My child, you are your mother’s daughter. Her voice speaks to me in yours. I will do what I can for that miserable man, for her sake and yours.”

Her face quivered as she heard these words, and she turned away to hide her emotion. He could not have spoken words which would more cheer her than these which spoke of a likeness to her mother. Would she ever be able in some small degree to take that vacant place with him ?

The day seemed to pass wearily for Bride. Abner was not in the garden. The Duke himself had sent him to the town to try and get speech of his turbulent grandson, and to persuade him, if it were possible, to comport himself with due humility, and without a needless show of defiance before the magistrates that day. None knew better than the Duke how much harm Saul might do to his own cause by an assumption of defiance and impenitence before the arbiters of his fate ; and none knew better than he how little chance the young man stood if he were once committed for trial at the County Assizes. Although the spirit of reform was stirring all classes of the community, the feeling against revolution was growing stronger in England with each small outbreak—stronger, that is, in the eyes of the governing powers—and signal examples were made of many obscure persons who had been concerned in turbulent risings and riots. Once before the criminal judges of the land, accused of arson, riot, and such-like misdemeanours, a short shrift and a long halter were almost sure to be his fate. All lay in the Duke’s power to avert a com-

mittal, and Abner had been despatched with all speed to seek and use his influence with the impracticable young man, that he might not tie a rope round his own neck by some such speeches as he had made before Captain O'Shaughnessy.

The day seemed interminably long to Bride. She went down to the fishing-village, and spoke earnestly with many of the men (now returned home in that state of sheepish shame and satisfaction that betrayed the fact of their having been engaged in some lawless but by no means profitless undertaking) of the wickedness of such attacks on other people's property, and this spoiling of other people's goods.

They listened to her grave gentle remonstrances in silence, half ashamed of their conduct so long as her eye was upon them, never daring in her presence to attempt the style of argument freely indulged in alone. There was not one of those wild rough men who would have laid a finger on this slight gentle girl, not though she was clad in gold and jewels, or would have spoken a rough word or used an oath in her presence. She and her mother had been and still were an embodiment to them of something transcendently pure and holy: it was the one elevating and sanctifying element in their lives; and many a man or woman, when the hand of death seemed about to clutch them, had sent in haste to know whether one of the ladies from the castle would come, feeling that in such a presence as that even the king of terrors would be robbed of half his power to hurt.

The day drew at last to its close, and Bride stationed herself at a window to watch for the return of her father. She saw him at last riding slowly up the ascent, with the servants behind him; and giving him time to alight and reach the hall, she met him there with an eager question on her lips.

"Oh, papa, what have you to tell me?"

"He is not committed for trial," answered the Duke, as he moved slowly across to his study, and sat down wearily in his own chair. "I could not save him altogether, and perhaps it will be well for him to taste prison discipline after what he has been doing these past weeks."

"Prison! Oh, is Saul in prison?"

"He has been sent to jail for six months. It was the least sentence that could well be passed upon him. There were two on the bench almost resolved to make a criminal case of it; but as you say, my love, my word goes a long way yet, and Mr. Tremodart and Mr. St. Aubyn and another clergyman were on the side of mercy. Your story was told, and it was corroborated by Captain O'Shaughnessy, and Saul's previous good character and steadiness up to the time he had been led away by demagogues" (and a little spasm crossed the Duke's face) "was all in his favour. It was the first time he had been had up—a first offence in the eyes of the law, though there were stories of months of conduct the reverse of satisfactory to the authorities. Still he had dispersed the crowd last night—no one could dispute that; and he was not proved to have been present at the firing of the mills. The evidence on that point was too confused and contradictory to go for anything. He denied himself having been there, and we all believed he spoke the truth, for he seemed almost reluctant to admit that he had not been in the forefront of the riot. He had been attracted to the spot by the sight of the flames, and had consented to head a march upon my yard. How that ended you know. There was another ringleader who had headed the arson mob, a cobbler, a well-known and most dangerous man. He was committed for trial; there is no chance for him. His life

will pay the forfeit of his crime; but Saul Tresithny has escaped with six months' imprisonment. Let us hope that he will have time and leisure in prison to meditate on the error of his ways and come out a better and a wiser man."





CHAPTER XII

AUTUMN DAYS

DURING the latter half of the year 1830, England was passing through some searching experiences, and through a crisis of her political history. The events of these momentous years of the Reform struggle have become by this time a matter of history, but a very brief outline of passing events may not be out of place for younger readers.

When George IV. mounted the throne, the hopes of the Whig party rose high. He was held to be the champion of liberty and reform, and it was a bitter disappointment to those who had regarded him as the friend and pupil of Fox, to find him cast himself into the arms of the Tory party and turn his back on former associates. The leaven of reformed representation had taken such hold of the nation, however, that already a strong party existed, not in the country alone, but in Parliament; yet the prospects of that party were at a very low ebb, till the sudden turn brought about in the first place by the death of the king, and secondly by the "Three days of July" in Paris, when an arbitrary ministry, striving to override the Chamber of Deputies and subvert the constitution, brought about the momentous rising in Paris which cost Charles X. his throne, and raised Louis Philippe to be "King of the Barricades."

With the accession of William IV., the hopes of the

Reform party rose high. The Sailor Prince, as the people liked to call him, although he had been something of a Tory in early life, did not stand pledged to any side in politics, and might have the shrewdness to take warning by the fate of his brother of France, and deem it wise and politic to support all that was right and reasonable in the projected scheme of reform. The champions of the movement were Lord Grey, Lord Durham, his son-in-law, Lord John Russell, and Lord Brougham; but the Duke of Wellington and his cabinet were strenuously opposed to any alteration in the existing method of Parliamentary representation; and when Parliament met for the first time in the new king's reign, in October, the premier plainly stated this opinion in his opening speech, and with his customary boldness asserted that not only would he introduce no measure of reform, but he would strenuously oppose any that should be brought before the House.

It is well for a minister to have the courage of his opinions; but from the moment of the delivery of that speech the existing ministry became highly unpopular throughout the country. All far-seeing men, of whatever shade of opinion, recognised that, whether for good or ill, the time had come when something must be done to give the large cities and the opulent middle classes a voice in the representation of their country. The rotten boroughs, however desirable from a partisan point of view, were obviously an abuse, and were doomed; the country was in a state of ferment which threatened to become dangerous, and the spirit shown by the Wellington Ministry was one which was at that juncture impossible to carry out in practical legislation. They recognised this themselves, and resigned in November, upon a very small and insignificant defeat, knowing that if they did not do so then, they would only be forced later on upon a more crucial question.

Lord Grey was intrusted by the king with the formation of the next ministry, and the winter months were spent in private discussions amongst the leaders of the Reform party as to the nature of the bill to be introduced. Its terms were kept a profound secret till the following March, when Lord John Russell announced them in a densely packed and intensely excited House of Commons. After a spirited debate the House agreed to accept the introduction of the bill for amending the representation without a division; but the second reading was carried only by a majority of one, and the Government, foreseeing that so strong a measure could never be carried through committee with such an uncertain majority, determined to appeal to the country, and on sustaining a small defeat on a resolution of General Gascoigne's, resolved on a dissolution. The king was greatly opposed to this, but was persuaded at last to consent to it; and to the great joy of the reforming party all over the country, Parliament was dissolved, and writs for a fresh election issued.

This is anticipating matters in the course of the narrative, but it is better to give the brief abstract of the work of Lord Grey's ministry consecutively. As for the terms of the new Reform Bill, they will be found in any history of the day, and are hardly in place in the pages of a story.

These autumn days, spent by Saul Tresithny eating out his heart in prison, but by the country at large in a state of seething excitement and unrest, and by such men as Eustace Marchmont in an eager canvassing amongst men of all shades of opinion and all sorts of positions for adherents to the new gospel of reform and emancipation, were passed by Bride very quietly in her sea-girt home, and by the Duke in much serious thought, and study of the vexed questions of the day.

He and his daughter, since that day when she made

her appeal to him on behalf of Saul, had drawn slowly yet surely nearer together. The change was hardly noticeable at first, though Bride was sensible of an increased gentleness in her father's manner. But by degrees he came to talk more to her of the things working in his mind, and she began to ask questions of him, which hitherto she had kept locked up in her own heart. Both were the better for the outlet, and began to look forward to the evening hour after dinner, when they sat together in the big drawing-room and spoke of whatever was uppermost in their minds. It was in this way that they came to speak often about the questions of the day, which subject led naturally to that of Eustace and his doings and sayings. Eustace was often a great deal in the minds both of father and daughter just then. He wrote to the Duke regularly, though not frequently, and his letters were always full of interesting information, though this information was not always palatable to the recipient, who was too old to change his attitude of mind, and whilst striving after tolerance and a spirit of justice and impartiality, regarded with something very much like dread the coming strife.

"Shall we invite Eustace to spend his Christmas with us this winter?" asked the Duke of his daughter one day towards the latter end of October.

Bride glanced at her father, and her cheek crimsoned suddenly.

"If—if—you wish it, papa," she said, with visible hesitancy.

The old man glanced at her with a quick searching look.

"Does that mean you would not wish it yourself?"

"I—I—hardly know. I had not thought of it. Eustace was very kind to me when he was here; but——"

Again she faltered in a way that was not much like her, and her father, watching her with a newly awakened interest, said gently—

"I do not wish to distress you, my dear. Perhaps there is something in this that I do not understand. I have no wish to force your confidence. We will say no more about it."

But Bride rose quickly, and came and knelt down beside her father, turning her sweet trustful face up to his.

"Papa, do not speak so, please—as though I would not tell you everything in my heart. I think I should like you to know. I did not say anything at first—I did not know whether Eustace might have done so or not, for he went the very same day, and I think just when it happened I could not have talked about it. But before he went he told me that he loved me, and he asked me to be his wife; but I could not, and so he went away; and I do not know whether he will ever come back any more. That is why I do not know what to say about asking him for Christmas."

The Duke was silent for many minutes, stroking Bride's soft hair with gentle fingers, and looking very thoughtfully into her face. She knelt beside him, only thankful for the caressing touch, which was still sufficiently infrequent to stir her pulses and awaken a sense of indescribable happiness.

"So he asked you to be his wife, and you refused him. What does that mean, Bride? Does it mean that you do not like him?"

"No, papa; it means that I do not love him."

The Duke paused and looked into the fire. The expression on his face made the girl ask quickly—

"You are not vexed with me for answering as I did?"

"No, my child, I am not vexed. You were right to answer according to the dictates of your own heart. And yet, had things been a little different with Eustace, I would gladly have seen you his wife."

A faint glow of colour stole into Bride's face.

"If things were different with Eustace," she said very softly, "I think perhaps I could have answered differently."

I think about him a great deal. I am grateful for his love, and it hurts me to have none to give in return ; but as things now are, I cannot give it to him. He grieves me so often. I know that he would make me miserable if I had let his earnestness carry me away. He might be so great, so noble, so good, but he just fails in everything ; and I think he would break my heart if I were his wife."

The Duke looked earnestly into her earnest eyes.

"It is his views that stagger you? Yes, my child, that is what I feel about him—and them. I will not deny that when first he came to us I had hopes that you and he might learn to love one another. You will never be anything but a rich woman, Bride, even though Penarvon and its revenues must go to Eustace. You will have your mother's ample fortune, and everything I have to leave independently of the estate. You will have wealth and position ; but you are very lonely. You have no near relations, and your mother's health made it impossible for you to be taken to London and presented and introduced to society. Your life has been a very solitary one, and I have regretted it. I confess I had hopes with regard to Eustace ; but when I learnt what manner of man he was, and how he stands pledged to a policy which I can never approve in the abstract, though I will not deny that some of its concrete measures are just and fair, I began to feel differently on the subject. And you have the same feelings, it seems, as I."

Bride slipped to a footstool at her father's feet, and leaned upon his knee with his hand still held in hers, and her face turned towards the fire.

"Papa," she said, "I do not think it is Eustace's Radical views which repel me, except in so far as they are bound up in those which to me are both sinful and sad. I know that he has the welfare of this land and its people as much at heart as you ; that he loves his country

and the poor in it as we love them; that he wishes to raise and teach and make them better and happier. I know he would spend his life and his fortune in the cause and grudge it nothing if good could be done. There is a great deal that I admire and love in Eustace; but, ah! I cannot divide into two distinct parts his political views and those other views of his which are so integral a part of his character. To me they seem interlocked at every point, and therefore at every point I see something which repels me—something which I shrink from—something which seems to me untrue and evil in essence, even though on the surface so much may be said for it. I do not know if you understand me. Sometimes I scarcely understand myself—hardly know how to put my thoughts into words; but they are there, always with me; and the more I think, the less I can feel that the two things can ever be altogether divided.”

“What two things?” asked the Duke. “I do not think I follow you.”

“I mean, papa, the spiritual and the intellectual side of our nature. You know we have a threefold nature—body, soul, and spirit; but yet it is all one, and I think people make a great mistake when they seek to try and divide the physical and the intellectual from the spiritual. Eustace does—in practice, if not in theory. He wishes to gain for the poor an improved condition of bodily comfort, and I am sure this is a kindly and a right wish. He has told me things that make my blood curdle about the awful misery and want reigning in many places. He wants to raise men intellectually, to think for themselves, to learn many things which will help in their advancement, to strive after a better standard, and to be disgusted at their present ignorance and degradation. But having done that, he stops short. He has no wish to quicken in their spirits the love of God, which would purify these other desires and hold in check the baser passions they

so often arouse without that curb. Of their spirits he takes no heed—how should he, when he does not even admit that there is an inner and spiritual life—when he is content to remain in ignorance of everything beyond the limits of his own understanding, and to assert that nothing can be positively taught as truth which cannot be proved by the finite intellect of man? I may not put his case quite justly, because he does not speak of these things openly to me. He tries to pass them over in vague words, and keep the talk to ‘practical matters.’ But I have heard enough to know what he does think—to know that he has no faith in the Crucified Saviour—in an Incarnate God—in a Sanctifying Spirit; and without that faith, how can he hope to lead men aright? Ah! he will never do it!”

The Duke looked down at the girl’s face seen in profile as she half raised it towards him, and he marvelled at her, yet traced in her words the outcome of her mother’s teaching, and felt as though his wife were speaking to him through the lips of her daughter. He had always regarded his wife as something of a saint or angel—recognising in her deep spirituality a calibre of mind altogether different from his own, and in her faith, intense and vivid, a something vastly different from his own dry orthodoxy. He had often listened to her in wonder and amaze, half lifted up by her earnestness, half shrinking from following her into regions so strangely unfamiliar; but there was in Bride’s line of argument a thread of practical common-sense which aroused in him a curiosity to know more of her mind, and he said tentatively—

“You mean that you do not believe even in political reform unless it is based on the highest spiritual motives?”

“I think I mean,” answered Bride thoughtfully, “that I do not believe there *can* be any true reform

at all that does not come from a spiritual impulse. How can I say it best? Eustace is fond of quoting the Bible to me. He bids me remember that we are called upon by Christ to love our neighbours as ourself, and goes on to point out that he is trying to work upon that principle. But he forgets that we are *first* bidden to love God with all our soul and mind and strength, and that the brotherly love is the outcome, the corollary of the love to God which should be the leading thought of our whole life."

"Yes!—and what do you deduce from that?"

"Oh, papa, can you not see? Look what those men are doing who think that they can love their brothers and do them good without loving God first and best! Look what Eustace has done!—stirred up strife and discontent all round the country, landed poor Saul in a prison, provoked deeds of violence, lawlessness, and reckless wickedness—deeds that he himself would be the first to deplore and condemn, yet which are the direct outcome of his teaching. These men love their brothers, yet they stir up class hatred wherever they go—and why? It is because they forget that love of God *must* come first if any good is to come; it is because, though they themselves love their fellows, they cannot teach love of mankind to these more ignorant men whom they would lead. When men do not understand the sweetness of obedience to the perfect law of God, how can they ever be taught the duty of obedience to the imperfect law of man?—and yet we know that obedience to law—even when that law is sadly imperfect—is God's will and ordinance, and that it brings its blessing with it. Oh, if men would go about teaching the people to love God with all their heart and soul and strength, to love each other in the bond of unity and peace, and to *pray* for their rulers and governors, that God would turn their hearts from all thought of

oppression and tyranny, and make them to be just and merciful rulers of the people, then indeed might our land become a country blessed by God and relieved from the burden of her woes! If great and small would look to God for His guidance in all things, and cease warring with each other in anger and jealous hate, then would true reform begin. But when the cleverest, and often the most earnest men of the day leave God out of their thoughts and plans, and smile at the thought of working through the power of His name, then what can we expect but confusion and anarchy, and a slowly growing discontent amongst the people, which will lead at last to some terrible end? Eustace says that this movement is but the beginning of a huge wave that will sweep right over the country, and end by making the people—the masses—the rulers of the world. He looks upon that as an era of universal good to all—a Utopia, as he calls it—which is to supersede everything that has gone before—including Christianity itself—in its perfection of all human systems and the development of his gospel, ‘the greatest good to the greatest number.’ But though I think it will come—I think we can see that in the prophetic words of Scripture about the latter days—I fear it will come with more fearful misery and terror and tyranny than anything that has gone before. It is the men who practically refuse Christ—the Incarnate Son of God—though they may use the name of Christ still for an abstraction of their own, who will welcome the Antichrist coming in his own name. I think men *do* welcome any leader now who comes in his own name, and almost makes himself a god. Was it not so with Napoleon Buonaparte, whom some almost believed to be the Antichrist himself? It is those who come to them in the name of God whom they will not hear; for if they look to God as the Head, they must keep His laws; and men who are striving

after bringing about this new era of happiness on the earth, do not want to do that. They like their own ways best."

There was a long silence after this. Bride had paused many times for her father to speak, and had then gone on with her train of musing, almost forgetting she had an auditor. After a prolonged pause, the Duke said slowly—

"So this is why you could not bring yourself to marry Eustace?"

"Yes," she answered softly; "I do not think there could be happiness for us, thinking so differently. He thinks now that he could give up everything for my sake—but I know him better than he knows himself. Besides, I would not wish him to give up anything for *my* sake; if he gives it up, it must be because he knows and feels it to be contrary to the law of God—and I do not think such an idea as that has ever entered into his head."

"Yet if you could get him to give up some of his wild notions for love of you, it would be a step in the right direction," said the Duke thoughtfully; but Bride shook her head.

"No, not in the right direction—it would be doing evil that good might come—teaching Eustace to act against his conscience and better judgment, just to please me. It would be like what he is doing himself when he stirs up the evil passions of men to try and overthrow a great abuse. He admits the present evil, but says the end will justify the means, and that the evil is an incidental detail, whilst the good will remain permanent. That is where we cannot agree. And we are not likely to agree when Eustace really admits no outward standard of right and wrong, but abides by his own judgment and the prompting of his individual conscience. And even what he cannot defend he excuses—his conscience condemns,

but his judgment palliates the wrong—and there is nothing stronger and more perfect and holy to which to appeal. That is the most terrible thing of all to me, and, oh ! how terrible it must be in the sight of God.”

Bride had Eustace very much on her mind and heart just now. She had promised to pray for him, and she did this with increasing earnestness as the days went by. She prayed too for the unhappy Saul, wearing out his weary term of imprisonment, visited from time to time by Abner, who looked years older ever since the trouble of that August night. He brought back disquieting accounts of the prisoner to his young mistress, who never failed to ask after him. Saul was utterly impenitent and hardened. He had thrown off all semblance of outward faith, and was an open advocate of the very darkest and baldest forms of atheism. He had learnt this fearful creed from the cobbler, by this time lying under sentence of death ; but Bride recognised with a shudder now and again, as she talked with Abner and heard his sorrowful accounts of Saul’s words, the influence upon him of Eustace’s more subtle scepticism. Here and there a word or phrase came in where she recognised her cousin’s mind. Doubtless Saul had opened his heart on this point too with his master, and Eustace had probably only confirmed him in his unbelief by his assertions of the impossibility of knowing the truth where all thinking men were at variance.

The thought of these two men haunted her with a persistence that was wearying. She was haunted too by thoughts of that condemned criminal in his lonely cell, dying perhaps in utter blackness and infidelity, and passing out into the presence of his Maker without one thought of repentance or submission. Suppose Saul had been called upon to die, would he too have gone forth in that frame of mind ? If illness or accident were to smite down Eustace, what would be his method of meeting death ? Would they all reject the love of the Saviour ?

Would they all remain impenitent to the last? And what, ah! what was the fate of those who passed away without one cry for mercy, without one glance towards that Cross whereon the sins of the whole world had been expiated?

This thought became such a terror to her, that she took it at last to her one friend and confidante, Mrs. St. Aubyn, and she had hardly got out her trouble before the Rector himself, unknowing of her visit, entered his wife's room; and Bride hardly knew whether she were glad or sorry that the question should be referred to him.

It was Mrs. St. Aubyn who told her husband the nature of their talk, and added, as she did so—

“I was going to say that I myself almost doubted whether any human soul could die absolutely and entirely impenitent. We know that the outward aspect of some remains unchanged to the last; but how can any man dare to deny that some strange and mysterious intercourse may not go on in spirit between man and his Maker, unknown and unseen by any human eye? Thought cannot be measured by our time. A few brief seconds may be enough to establish some sort of spiritual communication. Where we are told so little, perhaps it is not wise to speculate too curiously; but I cannot help thinking that where blind ignorance and the doctrine of false teachers has kept a soul away from God, He may yet in His infinite mercy deal with that erring soul at the last in such a way as to break in upon the darkness, and kindle one ray of the Divine love, even with the dying breath. For we know that it is not the will of the Father that one should perish, and that He gave His Son to die for all—only they must approach Him through the living Saviour.”

She looked at her husband as she spoke, and he smiled in response as he said—

"There are mysteries in God's dealings with man into which we may not too closely look, and especially is this the case in reference to those departed or departing this life; but there is so much that we *do* know to cheer and encourage us to hope all things and believe all things, that we may well let our minds dwell upon these things, and argue from them that God's ways are wider and more merciful than the heart of man can fathom."

"Bride is unhappy about several persons who seem to be wandering so far away from the fold," said Mrs. St. Aubyn, in her gentle tones. "She is suffering, as we all suffer at some time or another, when those we love seem rather against than with us. Can you say something to comfort her? I think she has come here for a little bit of comfort. Have you not, my child?"

Bride's soft eyes swam in tears. She was rather unhinged by her own intensity of thought. The motherly words almost broke her down. Mrs. St. Aubyn took her hand and caressed it gently. The clergyman, after a moment of silence, spoke, in his thoughtful tender fashion—

"Yes, we have so much cause for hope, even for those who have gone far, far astray. We must not think of them as sundered from the love of the Father, for we know that He does not so regard them, even though His heart may be full of pain at the thought of their transgressions and neglect. We have such beautiful lessons set before us by our Lord, who knew the heart of the Father as none of us can know it. Let us think, just for one minute, of that wonderful story of the prodigal son."

Bride raised her face quickly.

"He repented," she said softly.

"Yes," said Mr. St. Aubyn, "he had been full of self-will and folly. He had gone very far from the father's house, and the place which was his there by the father's

wish. He was in a far country. He had squandered the gifts of a loving father—the talents, the faculties, the opportunities—upon unworthy and sinful objects. He had followed the dictates of his own heart, and had not heeded his father's loving counsel and admonitions; and at the last he was reduced to husks, those unsubstantial and empty husks which are in the end all that is left to us of a life of worldly pleasure, take what form it will at the outset. Only the husks remained, and the hunger of the soul set in, which is the worst hunger of all to bear. When that stage has been reached, the backward glance to the father's house becomes inevitable. The young man in the far country felt it; and I think there was much more than the mere craving for physical comforts in the resolve which was embodied in the words, 'I will arise and go to my father.' There is much more than that in those words of penitence, followed up by the resolve to ask, 'Make me as one of thy hired servants.' That was what the son set out to say—'make me as one of thy hired servants;' but when he reached his father he could not say it. Why not?"

Bride was silent. The tears were still in her eyes. Mr. St. Aubyn looked at her, looked at his wife, and then went on softly—

"He could not say it because he was ashamed to say it—because the love of his father, the love which was watching for him after all these years of absence, which went out to meet him whilst he was yet a great way off, which wrapped him round in its embrace in that mysterious fulness of fatherhood, shamed him into silence. He could confess his sins and his unworthiness; perhaps at no moment had he ever felt so utterly humiliated, yet he could not say 'make me as one of thy hired servants'—the father's love had taught him his place as a son; the father's love had broken down the last barrier of reserve. Unworthy, humbled to the dust, broken down by his

emotion, he yet knew that it was as a son he was received back ; and the deep unchanging love of the father *shamed* him, I say, from trying to seek the lower place. When God gives us the right to call ourselves sons, is it for us to say, ‘ Nay, Lord, but let me be as a hired servant ? ’ Is that the humility that the Lord asks of us ? Is that the truest faith ? ”

Still Bride was silent, and as if in answer to her unspoken thought, Mr. St. Aubyn continued—

“ Thank God it is given to some of us to remain ever in the Father’s house. We have not been tempted to stray from it. We live in His love, and seek every day to do Him service. But there is always the peril to us of looking abroad at our brothers who have wandered away, and of asking ourselves, sometimes in tender anxiety, sometimes with a sense of compassionate disfavour, sometimes perhaps in something too nearly approaching scorn, whether for them there can ever be a return to the Father’s house, whether they will ever be worthy to be received there once more, even if they do return ; and there are not lacking those amongst us, I fear, who would sometimes, consciously or unconsciously, deny them their place in the home, judging them to have lost it for ever through disobedience and rebellion.”

Bride clasped her hands together, her soft eyes shining.

“ Oh, go on,” she said softly ; “ tell me the rest.”

“ It has been told already, my child, told in the reception of the erring son, not as a stranger or a servant, but as a son. The love of the Father transcends our love for our brethren, as much as did the father’s love transcend that of the jealous elder son. It is not for us to despair for the wanderers, for the Father does not despair of them. He watches for them, and when their faint and lagging footsteps are homeward turned, irresolutely perhaps, fearfully perhaps, despondently perhaps, while they are a great way off he goes Himself to meet them. He

sends no servant; He sends no brother even; He goes Himself. And then, when the lost son feels the Father's arms about his neck, hears the Father's voice speaking in his ear, the faint and fearful love of his heart is turned to a deep stream of true filial devotion, and he knows himself in all his abasement and humility for a son, and the first word he speaks, amidst his tears, is the word 'Father.' And after that word is spoken there can be no talk of being a hired servant. Father!—our Father—that is the essence of Christ's redeeming work on earth."

"Thank you," said Bride, drawing a long breath; "I think you have given me comfort. I was too much like the elder brother, too much inclined to despair of those who had strayed away. I will think of them differently now. Surely they will one day turn back to the home again."

"I trust so; we can at least pray that it may be so. Prayer is the strongest power there is for leading men back to God; and I often think and note that, when He would draw to Himself an erring son who will not pray for himself, He puts it into the heart of a brother or a sister to pray for him, and so the erring one is drawn back towards the Father's house."

Bride's face quivered as she held out her hand in farewell, but she went home greatly comforted.





CHAPTER XIII

TWO ENCOUNTERS

BRIDE was riding slowly down the hill from St. Erme's on her little Exmoor pony, with a grave and sorrowful face. Around her the green billowy downs stretched away in all their bright spring greenness, overhead the larks were carolling as though their hearts were filled with rapture, whilst far below the sea tossed and sparkled in the brilliant sunshine in a fashion that was exhilarating and gladsome.

It was a day late on in March—one of those days not unfrequent at that season, especially in the south and west—a day that seems filled with a promise of coming summer—a day in which all nature rejoices, which stirs the pulses and sets the blood coursing joyously, and fills the air with subtle promises of life and hope.

Bride's face had been tranquil and happy as she rode up the heights towards Farmer Teazel's farm, but it was sorrowful and troubled now as she returned, for she had failed in the mission on which she had been bound, and was experiencing one of those revulsions of feeling which often follow upon a period of solitary meditation and resolve, when the dreamer is brought face to face with the stern realities of human life and human nature.

Bride's mission to the farm had been to plead with the farmer to offer a place in his service to Saul Tresithny,

now just out of prison. His sentence had been up a few weeks earlier, but he had been ill of fever in the prison hospital when the period of release came, and had only that week been set at liberty.

All through the term of his imprisonment Bride's thoughts and her prayers had been much exercised with him. The compassion she felt towards him partook of the nature of a great yearning tenderness, curious in a girl of her age and station, and she could not help believing that her feelings must be in some sort reflected in the minds of others. Her father she knew felt compassion for Saul, though he seldom spoke his name. Abner, as was natural, yearned over his grandson with a great love and tenderness, and both Mr. Tremodart and Mr. St. Aubyn were interested in him, and were willing to give him occupation in their service on his release, if he would accept it. But Saul's known aversion to service in any of its branches was too well known in the place for any one to have much hope of his falling in with either of these offers. Abner shook his head whenever he was questioned on the subject, and said he feared Saul had not changed or softened with his incarceration. But the thought came to Bride that if his old master the farmer, with whom he had always got on so well, would offer him his old place at the farm, that offer would be accepted, and she had gone up to talk poor Saul's case over with the kind-hearted yeoman, and get him to see the matter in the light that she herself viewed it.

But only disappointment and sorrowful surprise awaited her here. Farmer Teazel *was* a thoroughly kind-hearted man, and very fond indeed of the little Lady Bride, whom he had known ever since her infancy. He loved to see her riding up to his farm on the pony of his own breeding and choosing. He was all smiles and kindness till her subject was broached, and then she found that there was a limit to his benevolence, and to the influence she had

over him—a barrier like a ledge of hard rock against which her arguments rebounded helplessly.

Saul Tresithny had sinned in a fashion the farmer could not forgive, and he had no pity upon misfortune deliberately run into by a man who has had every opportunity of knowing better. The fact that Saul had averted the attack upon his own homestead did not weigh with him here. He argued that Saul had had his revenge on his (the farmer's) machines before this. The sturdy yeoman had his own grievance against Saul and his teaching, and was not disposed to be grateful for the other deliverance. No, Saul was a reprobate and a jail-bird, and he would have none of him. He had had enough of the mischief his tongue did before. It wasn't in reason he should put up with it again. No, no; he was sorry to refuse Lady Bride anything; but ladies did not understand these things—did not understand the nature of great, ill-conditioned demi-gods (as he called it in his haste) such as Saul had become. It was no use talking to him of forgiveness and mercy. It would be time enough for that when the man had repented. He hadn't ever learned that there was any call to forgive before the sinner was sorry. From all he heard, Saul wasn't a bit humbled or penitent. It would only be the old trouble over again if he came back; the farmer would take care he had nothing more to do with such a fellow.

When Bride had exhausted her eloquence upon the farmer, and he had gone out to his work again, she tried what she could do with the daughter; but Genefer was even more impracticable than her father. Half ashamed of ever having given encouragement to Saul, who had behaved so cavalierly to her afterwards, she was bitterly set against him, and did not pick her words when launching forth about him. Moreover, Genefer was now openly betrothed in marriage to young Farmer Hewett, and was mortally

afraid lest he should ever hear that she had permitted Saul to make love to her. She would not for anything in the world have had him again at the farm, and Bride was forced to ride away downcast and sorrowful, wondering in her heart how it was that people of the same class were so hard upon one another, and musing by degrees on the result to the community of a gradual change which should practically throw the governing power into the hands of the masses. Would that power be exercised on the side of mercy and love, or would it become only a new form of tyranny and hardness, far more difficult to modify and soften than any monarchical harshness of rule? It was a question she could not answer, but it helped to keep her face grave and her brow sad as she rode slowly down the hill, rode right down by the rough lane to the cottages upon the shore, where she had an errand of mercy to perform; and leaving her pony to nibble at the salt herbage at the base of the rocks, as he loved to do, she walked forward alone towards the margin of the sea, and came suddenly and quite unexpectedly face to face with Saul Tresithny, who was sitting in the hot sunshine on a rock, and gazing out over the sea, with those strange dark eyes of his that gleamed with sombre fire.

She knew that he was free, but thought him still at Pentreath, he having refused to come to his grandfather's cottage on his release. The recognition was mutual, and the man instinctively, though sullenly, rose to his feet. Bride glanced up at the tall towering figure, which looked taller than before in the gauntness of recent illness. There was something rather terrible in the gloom of the cadaverous face. Saul had been stricken down with that terrible fever which was so common in prisons during the previous century, and went by the significant name of jail-fever, and which still lingered about those prisons which were overcrowded or unsanitary, and generally

claimed for its victims those who were unused to confinement and a close atmosphere, and had led an open-air life hitherto.

The terrible sufferings Saul had endured during six months of imprisonment were too clearly written on his face to evade observation. What such incarceration meant to one of his nature and training can only be realised by those who have lived the life he had hitherto led, and have been out in the open air from dawn till dark every day of their lives, summer and winter, from boyhood. Bride shrank back as she saw his face, with a sense akin almost to terror; but then her sense of Divine compassion and tenderness for the wild impenitent prisoner came back with a bound, and she put out her little gloved hand and laid it on his arm.

"Saul, I have been so sorry for you, so very sorry," she said, softly and gently. "But it is over now, and you have life still before you. You will learn to——"

"To forget? never!" interrupted he, with a strange flash in his eyes. "I will never forget, ay! and never forgive, to the end of my days. Stacked like pigs in a sty, crowded together in hunger and dirt, and wretchedness unspeakable, the best man amongst them hanged by the neck till he died, and all for preaching the gospel of truth to a down-trodden people, that is what England has to look for from her rulers! That is what we have to look forward to who strive to raise our brothers from abject misery and degradation. Forget! No, I will never forget. I will avenge those months of misery, and the death of my best and truest friend; ay! I *will* avenge it on the proud heads of the tyrants of this land. Don't come near me, don't speak to me, Lady Bride. I would not hurt you willingly; but there is that within me that may prompt me to do you a mischief if you stand there much longer. Go, I say, go! You are a woman; I believe you are a good and a merciful woman; but you come of a race that is

doomed. Go, let me never see you here again! Look to yourself, and let your father look to himself, for they have made a Cain and an Ishmaelite of me; and I will be in very truth what they have made me. I will give them cause to tremble!"

But Bride looked at him with quiet fearlessness, sorrowful, yet not afraid. That the fever and weakness, combined with long months of brooding and suffering, had partially clouded his brain, she could well understand. His threats did not alarm her. She knew he would never lay a finger upon her.

"I am very grieved for you, Saul," she said again. "It has been very hard to bear, and the more so because all the while you believed you were doing right. That is what is so hard to understand in this world—how to do right without doing wrong too; and there is only one Power that can help us to know that. I hope some day you will learn to know that Power, and see with unclouded eyes. Meantime, if you will let me, I should like to help you and to be your friend. I think you know that you may trust me, even though you may not be able to help hating me."

He looked at her with a strange expression in his hollow eyes that sometimes burned so brightly, and sometimes were clouded over with a mist of bewilderment and semi-delirious imaginings. He looked at her as though about to speak, but then suddenly closing his lips, he turned hastily away and walked rapidly, though a little unsteadily, in the opposite direction; whilst a woman from a neighbouring cottage came hurrying out, and Bride saw that Mother Clat was approaching.

"'Tidden wise o' yu tu talk wi' yon lad out heer alone, Laady Bride. He be maazed wi' t' prison vever, he be," she said anxiously, with a backward glance over her shoulder at the retiring figure of Saul. "Duee go tu home now, and letten 'lone tu coom tu hisself. Yu'll on'y

be aggin' he on to du wusser ef zo be as yu try to talk un zoft."

"I am very sorry for him. He looks very ill," said Bride compassionately. "Do you know where he is living now?"

"He du be bidin' wi' me these past tu daays," answered the woman; "I wun't zay how long he'll bide. He's gotten zome money, an' he's a rare hand wi' th' bwoats. I reckon he can maake a shift to live down along wi' we, ef zo be as he's got a mind tu."

"Take care of him, then," said Bride pleadingly. "I think he wants care and good food whilst he looks so thin and gaunt. Give him all you think he needs, and I will take care you are no loser. Don't say a word to him, but just let me know. See, I will leave this crown with you now. Get him everything he ought to have. I never saw anybody so dreadfully changed before."

The woman took the coin and nodded. She was perfectly to be trusted, despite the peculiarity of her position in St. Bride as the known ally of smugglers, and the cleverest hider and concealer of contraband goods in the place. Bride perfectly recognised the distinction between general dishonesty and this particular sin, so common in those days amongst men otherwise upright and trustworthy. She left the bay a little comforted by learning that Saul had at least a roof over his head, and was amongst men who liked and trusted him. Mother Clat was, with all her witch-like aspect and rough speech, a kind-hearted woman, and would do her best for her lodger. Saul was better here by the salt sea waves than in some poor lodging in Pentreath. Evidently the death of the cobbler and the scattering of the little band of malcontents had for the time shattered his dream of becoming a semi-professional agitator. The fascination of the blue sea, the boundless sky, and the tossing salt

waves had drawn him back to St. Bride's. If only some gentler influence could be brought to bear upon him, he might yet become a changed character with patience and time.

"If Eustace could see his pupil now, what would he think?" questioned the girl to herself, as she rode up the rough beach path; and she wondered to herself whether his influence, could it be brought to bear, would be for good or for ill—though this seemed but idle speculation, as Eustace was far away in London, and she did not think he would visit Penarvon for long enough to come. Musing thus, she turned in at the lodge gate and rode quietly up the zigzag track through the pine wood, till, arriving at the point where the road divided, she took the right-hand fork and rode direct to the stable-yard, and three minutes later reined in her pony in the big enclosure, a groom coming forward to assist her to dismount.

Three strange horses stood tied up in the yard, looking as though they had been ridden somewhat hard that day. Stablemen were grooming them down with assiduity, the head-coachman looking on and making remarks from time to time to his subordinates. As he saw his young mistress he came respectfully forward.

"Has some visitor arrived?" she asked, with a glance at the strange horses; but there was no need for the man to answer. At that moment a tall figure entered the yard through the door of the covered way leading from stable-yard to house—entered hurriedly, as though to give some forgotten order, and Bride found herself face to face with her cousin Eustace.

They both started slightly, but Bride recovered herself immediately, and quietly offered her hand.

"This is an unlooked-for pleasure," she said gently; and his face flushed from brow to chin beneath the bronze of the sunny journey in March shine and blow.

"Thank you," he answered, pressing her hand gratefully; and then, turning for a moment to the coachman, he gave the instruction in reference to his horse which he had come to deliver. That done, he turned once more to Bride and said—

"Your father is not within—he has ridden out too. I thought I should have to wait for any welcome. I trust that I have not taken an unwarrantable liberty in coming thus unannounced, but I have news that I thought would interest the Duke, and it is necessary that I should have personal speech with him."

"I am sure my father will bid you welcome to Penarvon," answered Bride, with gentle dignity. "I trust the news that you bring is good and not bad."

"I trust so myself. It is news that cannot fail to stir all hearts more or less at such a time. Parliament is dissolved. There is to be a new appeal to the electors of the country!"

Bride paused to look at her cousin's face, which was full of an enthusiasm and glad hopefulness that was almost infectious. Instead of taking the covered way back to the castle, the cousins were slowly following the longer road by which horses and carriages travelled. Bride caught her long skirt up with one hand, the other held her whip. Her face was flushed with the surprise of this second unlooked-for encounter. Eustace thought he had never seen her look more lovely than at this moment, in the close-fitting habit and picturesque hat with its waving plume.

"A dissolution!" she exclaimed; "I thought the king was altogether averse to that. I thought your bill had just achieved its second triumph."

"It has, and it has not. The papers have kept you conversant with the bald facts of the case. But what it comes to is this, that without a more powerful majority than we have now, such a measure as ours cannot be

successfully passed through the House. It would be so mauled and mutilated in committee that it would utterly fall to pieces. We must know now what the country feels on this great question. We must feel the pulse of the nation. It is the only thing to do. The king was against the measure ; but the voice of wisdom prevailed. As soon as his consent was gained, I took horse and started off. I wished to be the first to bring the news to Penarvon. Tell me, Bride, what have these six months done for my uncle in modifying or changing his views on this question? He now knows the just and moderate terms of the bill. Does he feel against it all the same prejudice he did at the outset, when we none of us knew exactly on what lines it had been framed?"

"I do not think he feels any very great hostility to the present bill," answered Bride quietly. "He has fully recognised that there are abuses with regard to the representation of the country that may well be mended, and on the whole I think he admits the present measure to be moderate and wise. But he knows as well as you know that this is only the beginning, and whilst you approve heart and soul the movement of which it is the pioneer, he distrusts and dreads it. That is why the success of even a wise measure fills him with no enthusiasm. He still believes that the abuses which will grow up under your new régime, when it is established, will far transcend those which flourish under the old, and that sin and want and misery will increase rather than diminish. That is as much as I can tell you of his opinions, for he does not talk of this thing often. The subject is rather a painful one to him. It brings with it a sense of helplessness, a sense of drifting away from the old moorings into a troubled sea for which he has no chart or compass. I think he knows that the thing must be ; but he does not look

forward with joy to the future it will bring in its wake."

"At his age that is perhaps natural," answered Eustace. "He is a more liberal-minded man than many of his generation and position. I am thankful he is not bitter in opposition, for I shall want something from him that he might be very loth to give did he feel as some do."

Bride turned to look at him. Eustace was flushed and excited. His face had grown more intent and earnest during the past months. Bride thought that his expression was improved; but just at this moment he was more excited than she had ever seen him before. She wondered at the reason.

"I have come to ask a favour of your father, Bride," he said, as they reached the castle, and instead of passing through the gateway and entering the hall, skirted round the building till they stood upon the magnificent stone terrace that overhung the sea on the west side. "Do you think he will grant it me?"

"A favour!—what favour?" asked Bride, looking wonderingly at him, with steady fearlessness in her eyes. She was no longer shy with him, for her instinct told her that it was not on an errand of love-making that he had come. The last time they talked together alone he had been seeking for her love; now he had other matters foremost in his mind. The individual was sunk in the cause. Almost before the words of his answer were spoken, she guessed what they would be; yet she heard them almost with surprise.

"Bride, this next Parliament will be one that will mark an epoch in the world's history; I feel that I must take my share in it. I am a man young and untried, but I feel that I can serve my country in its need. I long to be one of its legislators in the coming struggle, which will, I know, be a triumphant one. I

have come to ask your father for the seat which he has in his own hands. He almost offered it to me once. Will he give it to me now, do you think, when I come to solicit it at his hands?"

Bride's eyes expressed a grave surprise.

"A pocket borough, as you have called them, Eustace? I thought the system of pocket boroughs was utterly abhorrent to you—one of the abuses which most cried for redress!"

"Yes—and I long to be one of the legislators who shall abolish the abuse!" cried Eustace eagerly. "I would sweep all such anomalies from the face of the earth; but to assist in the battle with all my powers, I must be entitled for once to sit in the next Parliament."

Bride said nothing. She looked away from Eustace over the sea, and he saw that a shadow had fallen on her face.

"What is it, Bride?" he questioned quickly, feeling the sense of her beauty and purity again stealing over him like a charm. He had fancied after all these months that he could meet her without emotion, but already he felt the old fascination creeping over him.

"I am sorry," answered Bride gently, "I am sorry—that is all."

"Sorry about what?" he asked quickly.

"Sorry that you feel like that—that you can stoop to such a thing."

He started as though something had stung him.

"I do not understand you," he said, with a certain hauteur in his tone and a look of pain in his eyes.

She raised hers to his and looked him full in the face.

"It is not difficult to understand. You look on these pocket boroughs as a flagrant abuse, and yet you are willing to profit by that abuse. It is just the old

story over again. You are willing to do evil that good may come, Eustace. I do not think that good ever does come when men have stooped to employ unworthy means. Take care you do not ruin your own cause by making that mistake all through."

Yes, it was the same girl he had left—the same Bride—the mystic, the impracticable woman of dreams and theories. Beautiful ideals are so plausible till you come to try and apply them to the sordid realities of life—and then how untenable they become! But how was she to know that, living in this old-world spot and in a dreamland of her own? So he stifled his irritation and answered very patiently—

"You hardly understand, Bride. Your father will have to nominate a member at this election, though probably for the last time. The abuse is yet unredressed, and cannot be redressed till honest men who love their country combine to blot it out. I wish to have the honour and privilege of being among that number; and I am your father's next of kin, and the man it would be most natural for him to appoint. It lies here; he must either give it to a man who would fight against the good cause, though he would accept the seat without a qualm, or it must go to one like myself, who, recognising the thing as a manifest outrage upon constitutional representation, yet for this last time would take advantage of a pernicious system in order to hurl it down for ever more. I hold that mine is the right position to hold. If I were to stand aside for a man who would take the seat and strive to hold back the cause of reform, I should be a traitor to the cause and to my country. I ought not to stand idly by without striving to win it for myself."

She made no reply; but her silence was not the silence of assent, and he knew it. He took one or two turns upon the terrace and then said—

"Why do you always try to take the heart out of me,

Bride? I never speak with you, but it is always the same old story. You look like one of God's angels from heaven; you talk like a veritable saint upon earth; and yet you stand there as it were opposed to every effort to raise and bless and benefit humanity — a champion for what is tyrannous and oppressive and hateful!"

It was not often that Eustace was carried away by his ardour in this fashion; but the excitement through which he had recently been passing had somewhat shaken and unnerved him. Bride looked away from him and out over the sea with one of those intense gazes of hers which calmed him better than any words could have done. He came up and took her hand, which she did not withdraw from his clasp.

"Forgive me," he said; "I spoke like a brute. I did not know what I was saying. But, O Bride! why will not you and such as you help us? Why will you stand aloof with pitying scorn when the world and humanity are crying aloud for your sympathy and help?"

"Not scorn," answered Bride gently, "not scorn; but pity—yes. I often do feel pity for you, Eustace, because I know that you will be so bitterly disappointed. You want to make men better and happier and more prosperous; and more prosperous you may make them by improved legislation. Many will be content when that is done, but you will not. Your aim goes higher. You want to see them raised out of their degradation—to see them ennobled and made truly better. And you will be so bitterly disappointed! I know you will; and I pity you often from the bottom of my heart; but indeed I do not scorn you. I know you—and—love you far too much for that."

She spoke with quiet fearlessness, and used the word in an impersonal sense that Eustace could not misunder-

stand. He bent forward and lifted the hand he held to his lips, and she did not shrink away, for it was not the action of a lover, and she felt it and was not afraid. Nor was the salute in itself altogether obsolete in those days, though growing rarer and rarer.

"You shall teach me the knowledge in which I am lacking," he said ardently; but she slightly shook her head.

"I am afraid not, Eustace; I am afraid the task would be too hard. You cannot see with my eyes, nor I with yours. You think all the way through that the end justifies the means. I hold that no lasting good can be, or ever has been done when unworthy and time-serving means have been employed. A man must be pure in heart before he can successfully fight the good fight against evil.

"You mean that I must give up hoping to sit in Parliament?" said Eustace hotly, unable to help applying the doctrine to the matter most near his heart.

"No, I do not mean that. I should like to see you there; but I would rather you fought your seat like other men, and did not profit by the very abuse you seek to overthrow."

"Seats are only won by wading through a sink of iniquity!" said Eustace bitterly; and Bride was silent, her face growing sternly sorrowful. Her heart often grew heavy within her as she realised the terrible wickedness of the great world without.

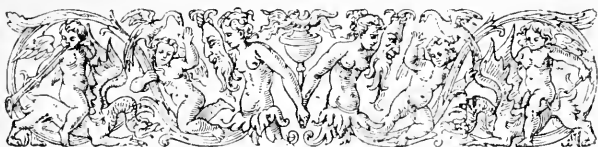
"No seat is worth that," she said softly; but Eustace could not agree with her.

"We must purify legislation; we must so work that a new and perfect system rises from the ashes of the old!" he cried, his quick enthusiasm firing at the thought. "Men can and shall be raised. We shall one day see the dawn of a brighter and purer day. This is but the hour of darkness which precedes the dawn. The bright-

ness of the day will atone for all. You will live to see a new world yet, Bride !”

A sudden light sprang into her eyes. For a moment her face was transfigured ; but as she looked at him that light died out. She realised how widely apart were their ideas of a new world.





CHAPTER XIV

EUSTACE'S DILEMMA

SHE is right in theory—she is perfectly right. She holds the stronger position. But yet I cannot give it up. One cannot live in the world, and breathe an atmosphere so far above it as she does. The thing is not possible. What!—go back to London—go back to my friends there, and say that I cannot accept my kinsman's seat, because in right and justice he should not have it to give! What a howl of derision I should provoke! And to have to confess that my adviser in this was a girl years younger than myself, who had hardly left her sea-girt home all her life—who knows no more of the world than the babe in the nursery! Why, I should become a laughing-stock to the whole of the town! I should never be able to face the world again. No, no, no—such scruples are untenable. A great work has to be done, and men are wanted of birth, energy, determination, and probity; I think I may, without undue self-appreciation, assert that I possess all these needful qualifications. Better men than myself have told me so. First let us get the upper hand, and then we will see what may be done for purifying the country and raising a higher and a better standard. If the world *would* listen to such teachings as Bride's, I will not say the world might not be a better place; but if it will not—why, we must

needs employ tools more fitted for the work. To be deterred by such a scruple!—no—it would be unworthy of the Cause!”

Eustace was alone in his room, dressing for dinner. His welcome from his kinsman had been kind and cordial, and he was now bracing himself for the discussion which must follow upon the request he had to make. The subject had not yet been broached between them, though he fancied that the Duke half suspected his errand, or rather the motive which had prompted it; but hitherto the talk had been all on public matters, and he had been relieved to find the old man by no means so hostile in mind towards the bill as he had feared to find him. Bride's estimate of her father's attitude of mind was pretty correct. He knew that some sort of change was needed, and that improved legislation was required for the peace and prosperity of the country; but he felt that the proposed measure would but be the beginning of an upheaval from which he shrank with natural distaste, and he feared that evils would follow of magnitude greater than those to be done away. Therefore he watched the advance of the wave with no little dread, feeling almost sad that he should have lived to see so many old landmarks washed away or submerged.

So much Eustace had gathered, but he was not daunted. Things might have been much worse. He had been received more cordially at the castle than he expected, and there was exhilaration in the thought of his close proximity to Bride, even though he resolved not to make any attempt this visit to approach her as a lover.

But he was still quite resolved to win her for his wife if possible. The few hours spent in her company had riveted his chains afresh. He had never met a woman who exercised one-tenth part of the charm upon

him that Bride did. Her very unapproachableness made her dearer and more fascinating. The bright sunshine of the March afternoon beguiled him from his room some while before the dinner-hour. He strolled out into the gardens, and began wandering there, thinking of his love. Turning a corner, he came suddenly upon Abner, and was grieved to see such a change in the old man. His hair had grown many degrees more white, and there was a bowed look about the shoulders which had not been noticeable before. His fine old face was seamed with lines that told of pain, either mental or physical, whilst the eyes, though retaining their old steadfastness and brightness, had taken something of wistfulness withal, as though some haunting regret or unanswered longing were always present in his mind.

"Why, Tresithny, I fear you have been ill," said Eustace, with his kindly smile, as he greeted the old man, and expressed his pleasure at seeing him again. "You have not worn as well as my uncle. Has the winter been too much for you?"

"Nay, it's not the weather, sir—I'm too well seasoned to mind that. I hadn't heard as we were to see you down to the castle again, sir. I wish you well, and hope I see you in good health."

"The best, thank you, Tresithny, and this beautiful air of yours is like the elixir of life, if you've ever heard of that. But I want to know what ails you; you are not looking the same man as when I left. Have you had some illness?"

"No, sir, thank you," answered Abner quietly, with a quick glance into Eustace's face that seemed to tell him all he wished to know. "Belike you haven't heard of the trouble. Such things don't get into the newspapers you'll be likely to see, I take it."

"Trouble!—what trouble?" asked Eustace kindly, his quick sympathies stirred at once by the thought of any

sort of suffering. "I have not heard much news from Penarvon and St. Bride since I left. My uncle has written occasionally, but he does not give me much local news."

"No, sir, there's other things more important to be spoke of; but his Grace was the best friend we had in the trouble, and there's no manner of doubt that he saved his life—poor misguided lad. 'Twould have abin a hanging matter with him, as 'twas with t'other, but for his Grace coming himself to speak up for him. I'll never forget that. He's been our best friend through-out, him and our own Lady Bride—bless her!"

"Ay, you may well say that," answered Eustace fervently; "a sweeter creature never drew breath on this earth. But I want to know more of this, Tresithny. What in the world has been going on? I did not know you could have such serious troubles in this little paradise of a place. It seems as though it should be exempt from the strife and crime of the great world."

"No, sir," answered Abner gravely, "there's no place where human life abides that is free from the curse of sin. We live in no paradise here. One place is very much like another, as far as that goes, all the world over, I take it. But I won't weary yu with my talk. There's not much to tell, and it's soon told. My grandson, Saul, got into bad company and bad hands last year. They deceived and misled the poor lad, and he, being hot and fiery by nature, was all the more ready to their hand. He took to preaching rebellion, and I don't know what, to the folks who would listen, and so lost his place on the farm."

"He was always too good for a mere labourer," spoke Eustace, in a quick low tone. "He was just eating his heart out in the solitude and the lack of human interest and sympathy."

"Well, sir, I don't know that he mended matters much by leaving. He went to Pentreath and got some sort of work there—I'm not very clear what—and got more and more with bad companions. Then came those riots you've heard tell of all over the country—sometimes against the new machines, sometimes against the masters, or any rich men whom the people think worth robbing when they get the chance. Saul was mixed up in these riots. I shan't never know, I s'pose, exactly how much he was to blame; but he'd got a bad name, and folks were after him; and at last he and the cobbler, whose house he lived at, were took up and brought before the magistrates. Saul got off with six months' imprisonment; but the cobbler went before the judges at assizes and was hanged. They all say Saul would have been served the same if his Grace hadn't gone down on purpose to speak up for him to their reverences: it was that that did it. But six months of prison has been enough for the boy. I doubt me he'll ever be the same again."

Eustace was not a little shocked by this story. He remembered Saul as he had last seen him—a fine, manly, fearless fellow, strong as a giant, and with mental and intellectual possibilities that raised him far above his fellows. He knew something of the state of country prisons; that was one of the abuses he and his friends meant to inquire into when the time came. Something had been done towards amending their condition, even in the previous century; but very much yet remained that needed to be done. How had Saul borne that life for six long weary months? It was bad enough for a town-bred man, used to confinement and foul air, but what must it have been for this son of the sea and the downs?

"Tresithny, I am grieved—I am deeply grieved," he said. "Tell me more of the poor fellow. I always thought highly of Saul. Tell me how he has borne it. He is out again now, I trust?"

"Yes, shattered in body and soul and spirit," answered the old man very sadly, though without bitterness. "The iron has entered into his soul, and for him there is yet no healing touch that can salve the soreness of that wound."

"He has been ill?"

"Ay, of the jail-fever. It's rarer now than 'twas years ago; but it got fast hold of Saul. May be the fresh winds will make a strong man of him again before long; but I'm feared he's gotten a hurt that is worse than weakness of body."

"Poor fellow!" said Eustace with sincere concern. "I must go and see him as soon as I can."

There was a momentary silence, and then Abner said quietly—

"Yu must do as yu will about that, sir."

There was something in these words so foreign to the old gardener's customary respectful cordiality that Eustace, who in his own fashion was sensitive enough, gave a keen quick look at his interlocutor, and spoke with subdued vehemence.

"Tresithny, I trust you do not believe that it has been my doing that poor Saul has fallen into this trouble."

Abner finished tying up the young shoot of the tree he was training before making answer, and then he spoke very slowly and with an air of sorrowful resignation, which seemed sadder to the young man than open expressions of anger or grief.

"Sir," he said, "I am not one lightly to lay any man's sin at another man's door. Only the Lord in heaven can know what blame may attach to each—the one for his act, the other for words which it were better he should not have spoken. No, sir; Saul has sinned, and he has suffered for his sin. I have tried to think no bitter thoughts of any of those who helped to lead him astray. Some of them are poor, ignorant, miserable creatures, who doubtless knew no better. Some, I doubt not, have

many and just causes of complaint, and have been goaded to violence and lawlessness by the fear of starvation, which works like poison in the blood. It is hard to think hard thoughts of such, especially when they are left in their ignorance and misery, and those who should be their pastors and shepherds seek not after the scattered flock to gather and feed them. My boy had doubtless seen and heard enough to fire his blood, and God Almighty alone may judge of the measure of his guilt. But for my part, I would that he had been saved from that teaching, and those thoughts which have worked like madness in his brain; and you know better than I can do, sir, how much of the wild words he uses have been learned from you."

"Not much wildness, I think," answered Eustace gravely. "He has certainly learned a good many facts from me, but I have said very much to him to try and curb the wild spirit of hatred and lawless revolt which I saw in him. He would tell you that himself if you asked him."

"Yes, sir; I don't doubt it; but when you bring gunpowder close to the fire to dry it, as you may think, and take every care that it doesn't explode, you run a great risk, even with the most cautious intentions. A puff of wind down the chimney will send a spark into it, and then comes an explosion. It's something like that when you educated and clever gentlemen begin to bring your fire near the hot inflammable minds of our ignorant lads. You don't mean there to be any spark; you mean to get your material well dried and in good working order, so that it can be used for right and legitimate ends; but though you're clever enough to make it dry and hot and fit for service, you can't stop the fall of the spark that brings about the explosion, and then you call it a sad accident and deplore it as much as any: but you don't always consider the fearful risks you run of bringing

about this very accident, which may perhaps recoil one day on your own head, and which has injured for life many and many a brave lad who might have lived out his days in innocence and a fair amount of happiness but for that."

Eustace stood looking down at the path with a thoughtful face. He could have brought many arguments to bear upon the old man, explaining how every good cause as yet undertaken against every existing form of evil had been marred and hindered at the outset, and indeed all through its career, by the rashness, the impetuosity, the ill-advised action of individuals; but he held his peace, and said nothing that might sound like an excuse for his own conduct. He *did* take blame to himself in the case of Saul. He had felt again and again, whilst talking with that fiery youth, with his strong character and individuality, and his burning hatred against the ruling classes, that he was playing with edged tools. The pleasure of finding so much intelligence and sympathy in a man of the people had led him on often to speak out things which on calmer consideration he would hardly have put into words so freely. From time to time his own conscience had warned him that Saul might one day turn out an unmanageable disciple; but he had hoped his own strong influence upon him would suffice to hold in check his fiery partisan zeal, and had forgotten how quickly that influence would be removed, whilst the memory of his words, and the feelings they excited, would live on and ferment and eat into his very soul.

"I am sorry," he said at last, looking up at Abner with frank, open regret in his eyes; "I think I was wrong. I think I had better have let Saul alone. He has too much gunpowder, as you rightly call it, in his composition. I should have been warned by that and have let him alone."

This frank apology evoked a smile from Abner.

"Sir," he said, "don't think I don't appreciate your care for the people, or that I don't know you wish to do good. I'm very sure of that; and Saul had heard a good deal more than was good for him before he ever met you. But knowing that a gentleman such as you felt with him went a long way with him—seemed to turn the scale altogether, if you know what I mean. But I'm not saying he might not have gone as far without, if he'd taken up with the lads of Pentreath as he's lately done. However, he seems to have took altogether against Pentreath now, and spends his time down on the shore with the fisher-folk. He'll be glad enough to see you, sir, I doubt not. It isn't many as he's got a welcome for, but I think he'll have it for you."

"And I'll try and see that he is none the worse for my visit," said Eustace, with a grave smile; and then he walked back to the castle, for the dinner-hour had all but arrived.

His face was grave and absorbed as he took his seat. The conversation with Abner had left a painful impression on his mind. He felt like a man on the horns of a dilemma. His whole heart was in the cause of reform. He felt that he was pledged to it, and that he must give his whole life and energies to it, come what might; and yet at every turn he was confronted by problems past his power to solve. He had worked amongst the people—and behold, his most promising pupil had been spending the winter in jail, and had but just come forth shattered in body and mind. He might do more good by sitting in Parliament and fighting the battle there—that indeed was his great desire; but to do so he must take a step which seemed in a sense to be a sacrifice of principle and self-respect. He seemed hedged in by difficulties all ways; but his resolution did not waver.

"Once let me get this seat, and the knot will be

cut," he kept saying to himself, as the meal proceeded in its quiet stately course; and feeling that the sooner the plunge was taken the better it would be, he only waited until the servants had withdrawn at the conclusion of the meal before he spoke out freely and frankly.

"Uncle," he said, with an abruptness that was the result of repressed excitement, "last year, before you knew much of my views on politics, you offered to give me a seat in Parliament upon the first opportunity. That opportunity has now come, and I have come to remind you of your offer, and to ask you whether—knowing my views—you still feel disposed to give it me. Your old friend has retired, as you told me he would. He will not sit again. I want, above all things, to be a member of that House which will—if I mistake not greatly—have the honour of passing that measure which will be the keystone to the prosperity of England. I believe that there is no doubt as to the composition of the next House of Commons. The voice of the nation cannot longer be misunderstood or ignored. It will be a great and a glorious time for England, and I want to have the great honour and privilege of serving her at this crisis. Will you give me that seat of which you spoke, that I may realise this ambition and happiness?"

"And pass a measure about which I feel the very gravest doubts, and which, I fear, may prove anything but the keystone to greatness and prosperity?" said the Duke.

"I know, sir, we do not think alike on this subject. It is scarcely likely we should. But you have had enough experience of the ways of the world to be aware that the advancing wave cannot be turned back. If these most crucial and important measures are to be passed, is it not better that they should be drawn up and passed

by men of birth and station, men of education and sound principle? Without claiming for myself qualifications which I do not possess, or any very great amount of experience in legislating, I think I have the qualities I have named; and I am a Marchmont, and the Marchmonts have not shown themselves deficient either in ability or in governing power in days of yore. I cannot but feel that you would prefer your kinsman in the House to a mere stranger; and I would remember and respect your scruples and injunctions, and would place them before my colleagues, giving them all due weight and respect."

The Duke smiled slightly.

"The boy talks as though he would be a cabinet minister at once!" he remarked to the room at large. "Do you suppose anybody will pay any attention to what a tyro like you will think or speak? and, for my own part, if I have anything to say to the bill which I hold to be worth saying, I can go to Westminster and say it for myself."

"Yes, in the Upper House," said Eustace; "but it is in the Commons that the battle will be fought."

"And you think you can be my mouthpiece there?" asked the Duke, a little grimly. "Boy, do you not think I could find a better mouthpiece for my views than you will ever make?"

But the question was put with a smile which made Eustace believe that there would not be much of a battle to fight. His kinsman was not without the strong family feeling which was so strong a characteristic of his race; and the very fact that Eustace desired the seat was a strong reason why he should have it. With all his advanced views, he was a Marchmont, and a man of rectitude and high principle. That the Reform Bill would assuredly pass the next House of Commons the whole country fully believed, and the Duke also. There was a

good deal in Eustace's argument about getting it drawn up and debated by the best stamp of men possible.

"But you—what has so changed your view?" asked the old man, suddenly turning upon Eustace, and looking keenly at him. "When first I made my offer, it only evoked a tirade against the abuse of rotten or pocket boroughs, as I think you called them. I was led to imagine that you would recoil in horror from profiting by such an abuse; and behold, here are you in a year's time craving to advance yourself by that very means! How comes that, my fine young redresser of evils? How can you reconcile it to your conscience to accept the seat which you dispute my right to hold?"

A flush mounted to Eustace's face.

"I accept it, and even crave it, that I may be one of those to abolish it in the future. Till the laws are amended, the abuse must last, and to amend those laws is the aim and object of my life. I admit that my position is one which appears inconsistent. You can easily put me in a dilemma by well-planted questions; but my mind is clear and my conscience too. You have to find a candidate for this seat, and I, as your next-of-kin, desire it. I openly proclaim to you the fact that once I am seated in Parliament, I shall strain every nerve to accomplish the abolition of the abuse by which I have gained my seat so readily; but I am neither afraid nor ashamed to seek it now. I will profit by the iniquity to expunge that iniquity from our country for ever!"

"To do a great right, do a little wrong," quoted the Duke thoughtfully. "Well, Eustace, you shall have the seat if you desire it, but I cannot help feeling that I wish you had not asked me for it, or been willing to take it."

The flush deepened in Eustace's face as the Duke spoke, and he caught the answering glance in Bride's eyes. He had purposely made his request before her, although it

cost him something to do it. He wished to prove to himself that he had the courage of his opinions, and was not ashamed of the trifling inconsistency, which he explained away again and again to what he called his own satisfaction. He was not prepared to make himself the laughing-stock of his friends in town for a scruple of this sort; but he wished he could have avoided the apparent inconsistency with these kinsfolk of his, who appeared to look on at the strife of parties and the battle of life from an altitude which was rather perplexing and discomfiting.

"I am greatly obliged, sir," said Eustace, hardly believing the battle was already won. He had looked for much more argument and resistance. "I will try to be worthy of the trust reposed in me. I hope you do not distrust me for my willingness to take advantage for once of this custom so soon to be made obsolete?"

"I do not distrust your loyalty to your cause; I think you deserve to sit in the next House, and may in time make yourself of value to your party. At the same time, since you do hold so strongly your advanced views, I had rather you obtained your seat in another fashion, speaking simply from a moral and theoretic standpoint."

"I agree with you there, in theory," answered Eustace eagerly. "I wish the world could be governed according to theory; but, alas! in practice too many of our brightest and best theories break down. If I had any chance of winning a seat by an ordinary contest, I would gladly do so; but I know that I have not. I am an untried man, and unknown in any constituency. I should not stand the ghost of a chance; and the bribery and corruption of an election under such conditions is too revolting to think of."

A faint smile played round the lips of the old Duke.

"Yes, bribery and corruption are the lawful methods by which our House of Commons is returned by the

country, save where there are rotten or pocket boroughs to be given by favour, or openly bought and sold; and when these last are done away with, and more contests set on foot, there will be more bribery and corruption, rioting and drunkenness, than ever, and this will be the first step of the great reform."

"Yes, but only the first step," answered Eustace eagerly. "After that step will follow others for the purifying of these contests, and the rectifying of these flagrant abuses. Some great men say it can and will be done by establishing a system of ballot-voting, by which no man may know how his neighbour votes, so that a deathblow will be dealt to bribery."

"*Will it?*" questioned the Duke significantly.

"Yes," was the fearless answer, "because men will learn to see the worse than folly of bribing a man who can pocket the bribe, take one from his opponent, and then go perfectly free and unfettered to vote as he pleases! The thing will die a natural death as a matter of course. It may die hard, but die it must."

"Yes, it will die in its open form. Votes will no longer be bought at so much a head; but mark my word, Eustace, a more corrupt and iniquitous form of bribery will creep slowly and surely upon the country. Governments will outbid each other with promises of measures which will appeal to the selfish and self-seeking passions of the people, just to get into power, quite apart from true statesmanship or the true good of the nation. There will be one long struggle after popularity with the unthinking masses—one long bribing of them by a wholesale system of promises, more or less faithfully carried out, which will corrupt the nation to the core as the old bribery has never corrupted it. Don't tell me, boy! I have lived longer than you. I know human nature. An inducement—a bribe—men will have; and the bribe will now be of increased power, increased franchise, increased

ability to levy taxes which those who levy them will not pay—a system of legalised robbery, which will sooner or later bring the country to ruin. Ah! yes, you smile. You think I am a croaker and a pessimist. Well, well, well—thank God, I shall not live to see the day; but that day will come for England before many generations have passed, when she will be groaning beneath the burden laid upon her by her reformers, but absolutely unable to break that increasing yoke from off her neck. Men may rise up in arms against their tyrants when their tyrant is a monarch; but when they are their own tyrants, their own legislators, their own oppressors, where are they to find redress?”

Eustace made no attempt to reply. The Duke was talking a language incomprehensible to him and absurd. Even argument seemed thrown away here; yet all the while he respected the sincerity and the character of the man before him, and he answered with a smile—

“Well, uncle, if we cannot agree as to the outcome of these measures, at least we can agree to differ, and we can each pocket our little bit of inconsistency with a quiet conscience. You will give me the seat, whilst holding that eventual ill will come from the cause I advocate; and I will profit by an abuse to do away with that abuse. I think it comes pretty much to this: we both know that this first step is inevitable, therefore you cease to fight against it, whilst I seek to help to forward it by every wise and right method. There are many men in the country more ‘advanced’ than I, and I have a dread of rash precipitation. I think I shall do good and not harm even to your cause by my voice. I shall certainly take warning by your words, and be always on the side of moderation.”

“You shall have the seat,” said the Duke. “because you are my next of kin, and because I respect you as a man, if I do not agree with you as a politician. In the


course of nature you will not long be able to sit in the House of Commons; and since your heart is set upon it, I will give you the chance this time. You can choose which you will do—accept the seat I have at my disposal—getting in by an abuse; or I will give my seat to the Tory member for Pentreath, and put you up in his place and give you my influence there. Pentreath has hitherto always returned a Tory candidate, and Sir Roland Men-teith is a very popular man locally—you would have no chance against him; but if I gave him my seat, and you stepped forward as the Reform candidate—a moderate reformer supported by the Penarvon interest, you might stand an excellent chance. There would certainly be another Tory adversary put up against you, but I know of no man likely to be popular. The people of the place have become strongly leavened by the spirit of the day, and my influence would go far to turn the scale with a great many. You can think it over and do as you will. Personally you have no influence, or little here; but as a Marchmont and the future Duke, you would have a good deal. There would be expenses of course—we could talk about that later. I do not seek to persuade you to anything; I only tell you what I will do for you if you prefer to contest a seat rather than get one by an abuse. You can think it quietly over, and decide at your leisure. Sir Roland is dining here in a week's time. He always comes to see me after his return from Westminster to give me all the news. We can talk the matter over with him then."





CHAPTER XV

STIRRING DAYS

IR ROLAND MENTEITH was slightly known to Eustace, who had spent much time in the lobbies of the House of Commons, and was personally known to the majority of its members, by sight if not by name. He was a fine-looking man of some five-and-thirty summers, and although a Tory by descent and tradition, was by no means an enemy of such moderate measures of parliamentary reform as were at present under discussion. He had voted for the reading of the recent bill, and was by no means prepared to pledge himself to his constituency as its enemy. There were many amongst his enemies who said he had no right, with the views he held, to call himself a Tory; but he would defend himself by the argument that Tories would soon cease to exist if they never moved one step forward with the times they lived in. A system originally sound and good could well become corrupt and bad under a changed condition of affairs, and if Tories were pledged to resist any sort of change, bad or good—well, they at once placed themselves in a false position, and made their own extinction only a matter of time. He maintained that the true Tory aimed always for the best and soundest policy, the policy that would make England respected abroad and prosperous at home. Tearing down and splitting up were actions bad and degrading to a government,

but gradual change, especially of a constructive character, was essential to the development of the national life. So he argued, and Eustace cordially agreed, whilst the old Duke listened with his slight peculiar smile, and said little, but kept true to the point in the little he did say. Sir Roland had come over to the castle in great excitement only one day following the arrival of Eustace there, and he had easily been persuaded to remain on as a guest whilst these important and stirring themes were under discussion. He was very well pleased to find in young Marchmont so moderate and temperate a reformer. Eustace had certainly learnt more moderation of thought during the past year, and was more cautious both in what he advocated and what he approved. He had had several experiences of a kind likely to awaken in him some distrust of the methods which once had seemed entirely right and praiseworthy; and he began to have an inkling that there was something wanting in his system before it could be called in any way perfect. The passions of the people could easily be stirred; but there was no power he knew of as yet strong enough to hold them in a just and proper repression. It was a hateful thing to him to be accused (as he knew he was in many quarters) of being one of those demagogues bent on rousing all that was worst and most cruel and wild in the natures over which he acquired influence. Sir Roland, after one of his many morning rides into Pentreath, told him flatly that he had the credit of being at the bottom of those riots which had caused such loss and destruction of property there in the autumn, and it was soon ascertained that the feeling there was so strongly against him that it would be hopeless for him to stand as a candidate on either one side or the other.

This piece of intelligence came as rather a severe shock to him. After the interview with the Duke on the day of his arrival, he had thought more and more of the sug-

gestion that he should contest the seat at Pentreath, sparing Sir Roland the cost and the worry. His own income was large, and could well stand the strain, and the Duke was a man of known wealth and liberality. Eustace, too, was indulging in halcyon dreams of contesting the seat with rigid purity of method, hoping even to shame his adversary into better ways by his own absolute probity. Sir Roland, although fond of his constituents, and rather fond of the excitement and bustle of an election and the sound of his own clever speeches on the hustings, was by no means averse to be spared the trouble and expense for once, stepping quietly into the Duke's pocket borough, and throwing in his influence for young Marchmont, with whom upon the essential matter of the coming strife he agreed. Eustace was feeling something of the keen exhilaration of the coming strife, and was enjoying the release from the anomalous position he would have occupied (at least in the eyes of Bride) as his kinsman's nominee, when this fresh blow was dealt to his pride and his hopes. Sir Roland had heard enough to be very certain that the very name of Eustace Marchmont would arouse an uproar of fury amongst the class who had the voting power; also, there could be no manner of doubt that his appearance as a candidate would provoke fresh riots of a very serious nature. Investigation of these rumours only confirmed them. Eustace Marchmont's name had been on the lips of all the rioters who made havoc of the town during the recent outbreak. Their young leader, Saul Tresithny, had quoted him as his authority for almost every wild argument by which he had stirred the people to madness, and roused them to any act of violence, in order to overthrow, or at least be revenged upon, their tyrants and foes. If he were to appear on the hustings, he would be at once the idol of the lawless (and voteless) mob; but the object of reprobation, if not of execration, to all the sober-minded citizens,

whatever might be their political views. Had Eustace come amongst them as a stranger with the Penarvon and Menteith interest at his back, he might have carried all before him, for there was no popular man in the place likely to oppose him under those conditions; but branded as he now was by the names of Radical and revolutionary, all men looked askance at him, and it was with a keen sense of disappointment, not to say humiliation, that he had to abandon the idea of contesting the seat, and revert to his original plan of accepting his kinsman's nomination.

"I suppose you think that my sin has found me out," he said rather bitterly to Bride, when this unpalatable news had become verified as actual fact. "I suppose you believe that I went about the country last year inciting men to arson and pillage and every sort of brutality. You know that is what is said of me by the respectable people of Pentreath, that I provoked and incited riot, and took very good care to be out of the way when it took place, that others might bear the punishment."

"It is cruel to say such things of you," answered Bride, with a quiet indignation which was very grateful to him. "I know they are not true, and I almost think the people who say them know that there is only a very small substratum of truth in them. But, Eustace," and she looked up at him with one of her rare smiles, "do you not think you sometimes say things almost as untrue on the other side? Do you not sometimes make out men in high places to be little else than monsters, when all the time they are almost as helpless, and perhaps even less to blame for the effects of a system, than you for those riots at Pentreath, which above all things you disapprove and deprecate?"

"I know what you mean," he said; "I think we all go too far in our attack and defence. But those men *do* uphold a system of tyranny and iniquity, even if they are not responsible for it, whilst I never uphold violence and

lawlessness. I hate and abominate it with my whole heart."

"I know you do; but you will not get ignorant men to believe it, when you teach them how bad the laws are. Their idea of mending the existing state of things is to rebel against it by force."

"Yes; and great present mischief is the result; but, Bride, if all men held your doctrine of patience and submission, no reformation or reform, no redress of abuses, no respite from tyranny and oppression, would ever have been effected in the world's history. When you have such imperfect material to deal with, imperfections are everywhere. Good is always mixed with evil, and will be to the end of the chapter."

"Yes; until the Kingdom," answered Bride sadly, yet with a sudden lighting of the eyes. "Yes, Eustace, I know that so long as human nature is what it is, nothing can be done without evil creeping in. But I still think that if men would be content to leave results, and simply strive themselves after the best and highest good, and try and teach the ignorant and the degraded the one true and only way of raising themselves—if men would look to God for His teaching—from the highest to the lowest—trying in all things to do not their will but His—then I think the world would gradually raise itself without these cruel scenes of strife and bloodshed, without these heartburnings and miserable factions. 'Thy kingdom come!' It is a prayer always on our lips; but do men try to apply the laws of God's kingdom to this earth which He has made and they have marred?"

"I think that is about the last thing men of the present day think of," answered Eustace, with a curious sidelong look at the earnest face beside him. "They want something more practical to go by. When it comes to be a question what God wills, every divine and every school of theology and philosophy has a different answer to give.

Such an appeal as that would only make confusion worse confounded."

A very wistful, sorrowful look crept into the fair young face.

"I was not thinking of schools of theology or philosophy," she answered very quietly, "I was thinking of God Himself as revealed in His Incarnate Son; but I do not think we understand each other when we speak of that, Eustace."

In very truth he did not understand her. Did she seriously believe that the affairs of the world could be directed by a Divine voice straight from heaven? It almost appeared sometimes as though she did, and yet in most matters Lady Bride, mystic and dreamer though she was, was not lacking in quiet common-sense and a fair amount of experience of such life as she had seen.

For a moment he stood silent beside her—they were on the terrace, looking down at the sparkling sea below. Then he roused himself, and changed the subject suddenly.

"Shall we go down to the shore and see Saul Tresithny? I have not succeeded in catching him yet. I do not think he tries to avoid me. Your gardener says he is much attached to me; but he has always been out with the boats. There seems plenty of fishing just now. I hope the poor fellow is not suffering from lack of employment."

"I think not. There is always plenty of work with the boats in the summer months. It is the winter that is so hard for our people, except when they take to smuggling, as too many do. I am afraid that is what Saul will do when fishing gets slack. He always had a leaning towards any sort of adventure and danger. Abner managed to keep him away from the fishing-village as a lad, and when he went to the farm he had other work, and was too far off; but I am afraid how it will be

with him now. I had hoped he would go to Mr. St. Aubyn and take care of his garden and horse, but he will not. Nobody can do anything with him—poor Saul!”

“I will see what I can do,” said Eustace, with hopeful confidence. “He is too good to turn into a mere fisherman and smuggler. There are traits of great promise in him. I suppose birth and blood *does* tell, and there is reason to believe that his father was a man of birth, I hear, although he may have been a villain. Certainly the man is very different from his fellows. I wonder whether he would come to London as my servant. I could do very well with another groom, and I know he has a great knack with horses. He might be very useful.”

“I wish he would,” said Bride earnestly. “It might be a turning-point in his life to get away from old associates and old ideas.”

They were by this time walking down towards the shore by the little ridge-like path before described. Eustace was behind, and Bride in front, so that she could not see the sudden light which leaped into his eyes; but she heard something new in the tone of his voice as he said—

“Then you do not hold that I have been the ruin of Saul—body and soul, as so many do? You do not think that to take him away with me would be but to consummate that ruin?”

“No, indeed I do not,” answered Bride gently. “I think that the people who say such things do not understand you, Eustace. I think you might perhaps do poor Saul more good than anybody just now, because I think he will listen to you, and he will listen to no one else. I should like to think of him going away with you. If you cannot teach him all he will have to learn before he can be a truly happy man, you can teach him a great deal that he will be better for the knowing;

and perhaps some day, when the right time has come, he will be ready to be taught the rest."

"Then you do not call me a demagogue, an infidel—a man dangerous to the whole community, and to the world at large?" questioned Eustace, with the insistence of one whose heart has been deeply wounded by accusations hurled against him—all the more deeply from the consciousness that the censure has not been wholly undeserved.

"No," answered Bride softly, "I do not call you any of those names—not even in my thoughts. I know you have not been very wise; I think you know that yourself, and will learn wisdom for the future. But I know that you believed yourself right in what you said and did, and were generous and disinterested in your teaching. About your faith I know very little. I think you know very little yourself; but we can leave that in God's hands. It does not come by man, or through man, but by the will of God. I think it is His will, Eustace, to draw you to Himself one day; but that day must come in His good time. I think we sometimes make a great mistake in striving to urge and drive those whom we love. Waiting *is* hard, and sometimes it seems very, very long. But things are so different with God—His patience as well as His love are so much greater than ours. And we can always pray—that helps the time of waiting best."

Eustace was intensely thrilled by these low-spoken words, which he only just caught through the plash of the waves beneath. That magnetic influence which Bride always exercised upon him was almost overpoweringly strong at that moment. He could almost have fallen at her feet in adoration. After the good-natured strictures of Sir Roland, the slight grim reproofs of the Duke, and his knowledge of the cutting criticisms and violent abuse levelled at him by the world of Pentreath, these words

of Bride's fell like balm upon his spirit. He felt lifted into a different atmosphere, and the question could not but present itself to him—

"If faith and those unseen things in which that pure girl believes, which are to her the greatest realities of life, are nothing but a myth, a figment of the imagination, what gives them such power over a nature like mine? Why do I thrill at the thought of them? Why do I see glimpses, as through a rifted cloud, of a glory, a beauty, a peace beyond anything I have ever conceived? Why, even by the teachings of my own philosophy, the fact of this stirring of spirit indicates a reality of some sort. And is there, after all, nothing higher than philosophy? Is there no object of objective worship? Is there, after all, a God?"

Little did Bride suspect the quick stirrings of spirit her words had evoked. She walked on, with her sweet face set in earnest lines, thinking of Saul and his grandfather's ceaseless prayers on his behalf, praying herself for him in a half-unconscious fashion, as was her habit when thoughts of the erring one presented themselves. Her mind was more with him just at that moment than with the kinsman behind her, with whom, however, thoughts of Saul were always more or less mixed up; therefore the question, when it came, did not in any wise startle her.

"Bride, do you mean that you ever pray for me?"

"Yes, Eustace. I always pray for those whom I love, and for those who seem to need my prayers."

He was silent for several minutes, and then his thoughts surging back to a question that had been on the tip of his tongue before, he asked, "Bride, you said I could not teach Saul to be a truly happy man. Do you think that I am not a happy man myself?"

"Not a truly happy one," she answered, with quiet certainty. "I believe you are happy in one way—in the

world's way. But that is not what I mean by true happiness. There is another happiness I hope you will learn some day—I think you will; and then you will understand. I do not think you can understand yet.”

He was not sure that he could not. He remembered the Duchess in former years; he had Bride before his eyes now. Even old Abner, in the midst of all his trouble, showed a substratum of unchanging serenity which nothing seemed able to shake. He believed he apprehended without understanding what manner of thing this happiness was—a thing altogether different from and independent of the fluctuations of enjoyment and pleasure which went by the name of happiness in his world. Eustace was receiving impressions just now with a force and a rapidity that was startling to him. Every day something seemed added to his list of experiences, and not the least was the peculiar wave of emotion that swept over him now.

Yet Bride noticed nothing different in his manner as they reached the beach, and were able to walk on side by side. He was a little absent and thoughtful perhaps, as was natural with the interview just hanging over him; and it soon appeared that their journey was not in vain, for the tall form of Saul was seen seated upon a rock not far away, and Bride said softly to Eustace, “There he is. I think you had better go to him alone. I will go and see some of the poor people and join you later on.”

Eustace was grateful to her for this suggestion. Now that he was almost face to face with his quondam pupil, he felt that he would rather be alone. He did not know in what mood Saul would meet him, and it was better perhaps that they should be without the fetter which the presence of Bride must necessarily impose.

Without pausing to rehearse any speech, Eustace walked straight up to the lonely figure on the rock, and holding out his hand in greeting (a demonstration very rare in those days between men of such different stations), said, with

warm feeling, "Tresithny, you have suffered in what you took to be the cause of the people. That must make a fresh bond between us, whatever else we may have to say upon the subject."

Saul started at the sound of the familiar, unexpected voice (the splash of the waves had drowned approaching footsteps); he started again at sight of the outstretched hand; but after a moment of visible hesitation, he took it in his grasp and wrung it till Eustace could have winced. The sombre face was working strangely. The mask of stolid indifference and contempt had fallen from it. There was a new light in the hollow eyes as they met the searching gaze of Eustace's, and the first words came out with something of a gasp.

"Then you have come at last, sir, and you have not changed!"

"Why should I change?" asked Eustace, with a smile, wonderfully relieved to find that this unapproachable man, who was puzzling all the world besides, did not turn a deaf ear upon him. Shocked as he was at the change he saw in the outward aspect of Saul, he saw that it was the same Saul as of old, a man full of strength and fight—a tool that might be dangerous to work with, or of inestimable value, according as it could be guided and tempered. A sense of true admiration and fellowship sprang up within him towards this stern-faced son of toil, with his sorrowful story and suffering face.

"Why should I change?" he asked; and then Saul's pent-up feeling burst out.

Every one had changed—the whole world—the very cause itself. All had left him in his hour of need—all had turned upon him and betrayed and deserted him. Months of solitary brooding, the delirium of fever, the overwrought nervous condition into which imprisonment had driven him, had all combined to produce in Saul a distorted image of life, of the world, and of every single

being in it. Hitherto he had locked these feelings in his own heart; but now, before Eustace, the one man who had proffered him friendship in the midst of his trouble, the friendship of comrade to comrade, man to man, it all came pouring out in one great flood of impassioned eloquence and imprecation, terrible sometimes to listen to. It was not easy at times even to follow his rapid speech, which alternated between the roughest vernacular and the purest English he had ever spoken, rehearsed a hundred times in his prison-house, as he had prepared the speeches which were to raise all Devon and Cornwall to arms, if need be, against the monstrous class tyranny under which the country lay groaning. Eustace let him have his fling, never stopping him by argument or opposition, leading him on by a sympathetic word now and again to outpour everything that was in his heart without fear. He knew by instinct what the relief would be, how much good it would do for the outlet to be found at length; and though unable to repress a sense of shuddering loathing at some of the words of his companion, he could well excuse them in the thought of his great sufferings and state of mental distraction, and was very hopeful by slow degrees of winning him back to a better and more reasonable frame of mind.

It was much to have gained his confidence—much that Saul was able to depend on the sympathy of his former master, and was not afraid of baring his inmost soul before him. Eustace was seized sometimes with a sense of something like dismay to find how absolutely Saul believed he would echo even the most blasphemous of his thoughts, how securely he reckoned upon finding in his leader the same absolute denial of all revealed religion—religion which he himself fiercely decried and ridiculed, as part and parcel of a corrupt system soon to be exploded. Much that the young man thus hotly declaimed against—much of his wild and random vituperation must have been learned from others. Eustace could honestly affirm

he had never allowed such expressions to pass his lips; but here and there a phrase of his own would mingle with the wilder words of Saul, and half startle Eustace by the method of its application. Also he could not help recognising, as this man poured out his soul before him by the shore that day, that his own standpoint had very slightly and insensibly changed from those days, more than a year back now, when he had first sought to awaken in Saul a response to his own ardent imaginings. What the change was he could scarcely define, but he was aware that arguments and assertions which would then have passed by as only slight exaggerations of a legitimate truth, now came to him with something of a shock, bringing a realisation of some unheeded change or development in himself which had silently leavened during the past months, till it had attained a proportion he never suspected.

Rousing himself with a start from the train of thought thus suggested, he tried to bring his companion back to the world of real things, and to leave these idle denunciations and invectives alone for the present. When Saul had about tired himself with his own impetuosity, and had kept silence for a few moments, Eustace spoke a few well-chosen words of sympathy, and gradually bringing round the subject of the forthcoming election, he explained to the ex-prisoner what had been going on in the world during his incarceration, and what bright hopes were now entertained in this country of better days in store for it, when a strong Government, pledged to redress the gravest of political abuses, should be in power.

Saul was not entirely ignorant of what had passed, but had very distorted ideas as to the amount and character of the opposition offered to the bill and the prospects of its speedy success. He listened eagerly to what Eustace told him, and his remarks and questions again struck his master as showing a quickness of insight and a power

of appreciation most remarkable in one of his class. He was a more excitable, a more sombre, a more embittered man than he had been a year before. His class hatred had sunk deeper into his soul, and become a more integral part of his nature. Eustace recognised how the humiliation, if not the destruction, of the moneyed classes was to him almost more of an object than the redress of the grievances of the poor. The two were linked together in his mind, it was true; but it was easy to see which of them held the foremost place. Eustace realised, as perhaps he had never done so well before, the temper of the French revolutionaries of forty years back. He could well picture Saul in their midst, and think with a shudder of the deeds he would commit at the head of a furious mob, wrought up to a pitch of ungovernable fury by the rude eloquence of such a leader. Perhaps he realised, too, what might come to England if her sons were stirred up to a like madness, instead of being worked upon by gentler methods. He well knew that there had been moments when his own country had been on the brink of revolution, and that such moments might even come again. Surely it was needful for the men who stood in the forefront of the van of reform to walk warily. They had an immense power behind them; but it was, as Abner had said, the power of an explosive whose properties and whose energies were but imperfectly understood. Reform may be the best hindrance to revolution, but it may also incite the very danger it strives to avert. Eustace had been told this a hundred times before, but he had never been so convinced of the truth of the warning as he was whilst walking on the shore that day in the company of Saul.

He suggested taking him away from St. Bride, and showing him the other side of life in the great centres of the world; but Saul, though visibly attracted by the thought of continuing near to Eustace, for whom his

love and admiration were most loyal, gave no decided answer. He shrank from the confinement even of freedom in a great city, shrank from even such slight bondage as service under such a master as this would entail. Moreover, there was no need for a speedy decision. Eustace would be some weeks at the castle; he would probably remain there till the result of the election was known. It would be time enough to settle then what should be done. For the present, Saul would remain unfettered and untrammelled.

"For I must be in Pentreath if there is to be an election," he said, the light of battle leaping into his eyes. He remembered elections in past times, and the attendant excitement and fighting and fun, as in those days it seemed to him. He was no politician then, and had only the vaguest notion as to what it was all about; but he was always foremost in the crowd about the hustings, cheering, howling, flinging missiles, according to the spirit of the moment and the wave of public opinion, which would ebb and rise and change a dozen different times in as many hours. He had always been instinctively the enemy of the Tory and the supporter of the Whig candidate, because he had always taken on every matter the contrary opinion of the Castle—almost as a matter of religion. Otherwise he could not be said to have had an opinion heretofore in such things. But the excitement, the indiscriminate treating, the rowdiness of the whole place, and the fights and scrimmages that were constantly arising, were like the elixir of life to the ardent temperament of one who was forced by circumstances into a life of monotonous toil. He always obtained a few days' holiday on such occasions, and spent them in a fashion dear to his heart. Now he looked forward to a longer spell of excitement, and to struggles of a very different kind. Then it had all been fun, now it would be stern earnest with him. There was a fierce light of battle in his

eyes. The hope sprang up again in his heart of striking a blow for the cause. Eustace saw the look, heard the half hissed words of joy and anticipation, and smilingly laid a hand on the young fisherman's arm.

"Yes, I think you will do well to be there. You are one of those who may do us good, and help on the cause of right and liberty; but not by violence, Saul—always remember that. Violence is not our friend, but our most deadly foe. It puts a sword in the hands of our enemies to slay us withal. There must be no unseemly violence at the Pentreath election—remember that. We must give our opponents no reason to say that the cause of reform is advocated by cowardly and unworthy means. Leave all that sort of thing to our foes. Let them get up as many riots as they please. Our part is to be just and wise and patient, secure in the righteousness and justice of our object. You will find we shall come out in a far stronger position by remembering this than if we organise disturbances and lead angry mobs to deeds of reckless lawlessness."

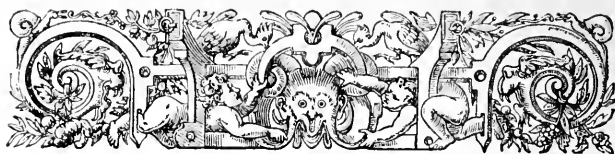
Saul made no response; Eustace was not even sure that he heard. His eyes were flashing, his nostrils working; he clenched and unclenched his hand in a fashion indicative of strong excitement.

Eustace judged it wiser to say no more for the present. There would be plenty of time before the elections came off to gain an increasing ascendancy over this wild spirit. His first beginning had been by no means bad.

Yet Eustace, as he walked homewards silently with Bride, could hardly help smiling at the thought of the part he should be forced to play with Saul. That there were stirring days coming upon the country he could not doubt, and he meant to take his part in them with a will; but he realised that, with Saul watching his every movement, and pledged to follow him to the utmost limit to which his own arguments could be pushed, he should be

forced to weigh his words, and direct his actions with a greater prudence and moderation than he had originally purposed. Perhaps it might be well for him to have this reminder well before his eyes, but he could not but smile at the peculiar result which had been brought about by his own endeavour to work some sort of small agitation amongst the people at St. Bride's, St. Erme, and Penarvon.





CHAPTER XVI

THE POLLING AT PENTREATH

THE VEN Bride caught something of the prevailing excitement as the days and weeks flew by, and nothing was spoken of, or thought of in the world about her, but the coming election and the prospects of the Reform party. The far West Country might be a little long in growing into the burning questions of the day, but once aroused, it could show an amount of eagerness and enthusiasm not to be despised by busier centres. Moreover, party and local feeling always runs very high in out-of-the-world places, and many in and around Pentreath who cared but little, and understood less, of the real point at issue, were keenly excited over the coming contest on account of the exceptional nature it presented.

Hitherto their member, Sir Roland Menteith, had been returned almost without opposition. He was popular with all sections of the community, and such opposition as he met with was of a kind sufficient to be the excuse for unlimited treating and unlimited rowdiness on polling day, without being enough to awaken the smallest amount of anxiety or uncertainty as to the result of the struggle. But now all this was to be changed, and as days and weeks rolled on, it became very evident that there would be a decided and sharp contest; and although the supporters of Sir Roland were fairly sanguine as to

the result, the election was not the foregone conclusion it had been in days of yore.

In the first place, there was already division in the camp; for so soon as it became known that Sir Roland, whilst still professing Tory principles, intended to give his adhesion to the bill which was before the country for the reform of the franchise, a strong party, including large numbers of wealthy men, at once seceded from him, and in a short time it was announced that young Viscount Lanherne was coming forward in the Tory interest to dispute the seat with Sir Roland; whilst in the extreme Whig or Radical interest a candidate was forthcoming in the person of Mr. Morval, a wealthy and influential middle-class man, whose power and importance in the place had been steadily growing during the past years, and who promised to bring a strong army of voters to the poll when the day should come.

The defection of these old-fashioned and "rabid" Tories from the ranks of Sir Roland was a serious blow, for hitherto he had always counted securely upon every vote this section of the community had to give. It was a distinct split in the ranks, and a very serious one. The young Viscount, though personally popular in society, was only a lad fresh from Oxford, and knew nothing of the bulk of his constituents. He had practically no chance of success, yet greatly endangered Sir Roland's seat, and was in great danger of making it a present to the Radical candidate. From a common-sense standpoint it was a grave error of judgment, but when party feeling runs high, common-sense too often goes to the wall. There was a large section in the county who absolutely refused to give any vote to a man not pledged to fight the Reform Bill tooth and nail. By this section Sir Roland was looked upon as a turncoat and renegade; nor could the old-fashioned soundness of his Conservative principles on other questions condone the fact that he

stood pledged to the support of this measure, which was looked upon as the first step towards the overthrow of the existing constitution.

Neither did the Whig and Radical section trust the policy of Sir Roland. They had too long been accustomed to regard him as the Tory candidate to look upon him with favouring eyes now. In plain English, the appearance of another Tory candidate in the field, pledged to the old-fashioned Tory policy, had taken the wind out of his sails, and made his position an anomalous one. He found himself in the quandary so many do who try to adopt a moderate and liberal policy without giving up altogether the older traditions in which they have been reared: he was suspected and distrusted by a large section on both sides, and regarded as one who was neither "fish, flesh, fowl, nor good red herring," a position not a little galling and irritating to a man who had hitherto carried all before him with easy assurance.

The Penarvon interest was his, and that went a long way; and Eustace, who worked most energetically on his committee, did all that one man can do to ensure a victory. Eustace, however, was not always the best of advocates, for though he had a wide popularity in certain classes, he was very greatly suspected and distrusted in others, and those who would most willingly have followed his lead were not of the class that had votes to give.

Still Sir Roland was by no means out of heart as to the result. He had a very large following of men of moderate opinions, and the support of the Duke, who was greatly respected by the upper classes in the neighbourhood, was the best guarantee he could possess that he was not going to pursue a destructive and outrageous policy. Men who had wavered at first and had heard with enthusiasm the news that Viscount Lanherne was coming forward, began to think better of the matter after reading some of Sir Roland's manifestoes and hearing some of his

speeches. The young Viscount, though eager for the excitement of the coming contest, and all on fire for the cause on which he had embarked, was neither a man of experience nor knowledge, and he betrayed his lack of many of the needful requirements of a politician whenever he addressed a meeting or harangued a crowd. People began to take up the name of "painted popinjay," which had been freely flung at him by the Radicals. It seemed somehow to fit the young spark, who was always dressed in the tiptop of fashion, and whose face was as brightly tinted as that of a girl.

Sir Roland had won for himself the name of "trimmer," and found it difficult to know what to call himself, since the name Tory was now absorbed by the Viscount's party, whilst the other opponent had taken upon himself the name and office of the Whig representative. At last, following the example of the great trimmer, Lord Halifax, he, with a mixture of tact and good-humour which did him credit and proved a strategic success, himself adopted the name thrust upon him, and in his speeches and printed addresses openly advocated the policy of "trimming," when it had become a certainty that neither of the two advocated extremes could any longer govern the country. Of course there was an immense power in the style of argument adopted from the great peer of two centuries back, who had often found himself in a parallel dilemma; and his arguments, dressed up in a fresh garb, were freely used by Sir Roland, and that with no small effect. Eustace read up the subject of compromise for him, and furnished him with most telling precedents to quote to his audiences. The Duke spoke to those friends who came to remonstrate with, or consult him, in a fashion that was not without effect. Men began to say to one another that if the Duke of Penarvon had reached the conclusion that it was hopeless to try and stem the tide, and that the wisest and best course now was to seek to place in

authority men of known experience, probity, and moderation to guide the bark of the country through the troubled waters of reform, why then they had better follow the same tactics. He would certainly have advocated a fighting policy if there was any reasonable hope of maintaining the struggle with success; but if he despaired of this, it showed, indeed, that the time for compromise had come, and every one who knew anything of human nature or the history of nations, must be aware that to insist on fighting a hopeless battle was only to stir up an infinity of bitterness and party feeling, and render the winning side tenfold more violent and destructive.

And so the days fled swiftly by; Eustace, though secure of his own seat, working as hard in the cause of Sir Roland as though it had been his own, striving to live down the distrust and ill-feeling he found prevailing against him in Pentreath and its neighbourhood, and gaining an experience and insight into human nature which he had never obtained before. He found himself sometimes in a rather awkward corner, it is true; for his own views were far more in accordance with those of the Radical candidate, Mr. Morval, than with those of Sir Roland, and it was by no means always easy to avoid being landed again and again on the horns of a dilemma. But since Sir Roland and he were of one mind upon the great question upon which the appeal to the country was made, Eustace felt that side issues and other matters of policy could be left to take care of themselves. It would have been impossible to remain a guest at Penarvon and to have flung himself into the arms of the Radical or even the Whig party (it was all one, called at the castle Radical, and in the town Whig, for the name Radical was still unpopular amongst those who were voters, though beginning to be caught up by the people). Eustace had no strong temptation to do this, having from the first taken a liking for Sir Roland, and feeling grateful towards his

kinsman the Duke, who had been liberal enough to promise him the coveted seat, even whilst regretting the nature of the great measure his kinsman was pledged to support. Eustace would have sacrificed more to win his goodwill and approval, or to keep in touch and in sympathy with Bride. She was awaking to a keener interest in the coming struggle than he had ever looked to see in her. He could not tell exactly what she thought about it all, or what view she took of the question of Reform; but there was something in her method of receiving his accounts of their doings that inspired him with a keen wish to retain her sympathies; and those he had found he could never have unless his own doings were perfectly upright and honourable. Many and many a time he was restrained from employing some common trick or some unworthy inducement by the remembrance of the look in Bride's eyes when Sir Roland had laughingly boasted of a like bit of sharp practice. In point of fact, he was growing to rule his life by a new standard since knowing more of Bride and her ideals. He hardly recognised this himself as yet; but, had he paused to look back, he would have known that there were innumerable little ways in which he had changed. Things which in old days would have appeared absolutely legitimate, if not actually advisable, were now avoided by him with a scrupulousness which often exposed him to a laugh. He began to ask himself instinctively how Bride would regard any course of action about which he was uncertain, and again and again that question had arrested him from taking a slightly doubtful course, and kept him upon the road of strict probity and honesty.

Nor could Bride be altogether unconscious of this herself, and it began to form a silent bond between them, which was, perhaps, almost dangerously sweet. Eustace was the most conscious of this, and it often made his heart thrill with pleasure; neither was it without its

effect upon her—one of these being an increased interest in everything concerning this contest, and the keenest sympathy with Eustace's strenuous endeavours that it should be conducted on lines of the strictest equity, and that nothing should be said or done to disgrace the cause or give a handle for calumny or reproach. Bride was scarcely more sorrowful than he when it was found that the agent was conniving at time-honoured abuses, and setting on foot the ordinary methods for vote-catching. Things that were looked upon as a matter of course by Sir Roland, and received with a laugh and a shrug, Eustace heard with a sense of repulsion which he certainly would not have experienced a year before; and he worked might and main to impose purer and more equitable methods upon his subordinates, till it really began to be said in Pentreath that Sir Roland deserved the seat if it was only for his probity and upright dealing.

Eustace had hoped to have Saul working with and for him in these stirring days; but, to his disappointment, and rather to his surprise, he utterly failed in bringing his disciple into the arena of his own efforts. Saul was working in his own fashion with a fierce resolution and single-heartedness; but no argument or persuasion on Eustace's part would induce him to cast in his lot with the candidate of the Castle party. It was in vain to say that he was on the side of the great reform, that he was fighting the battle of the bill; Saul would reply that Mr. Morval was also doing that, and that *he* was a man pledged to the cause of the people through thick and thin, whilst everybody knew that Sir Roland was only advocating the bill because he knew it was hopeless to oppose it, and that at heart he was a Tory and an aristocrat. It was quite enough for Saul that the Castle was supporting him. No gentle words from Lady Bride, no good offices from the Duke, had had the smallest effect in overcoming the bitter hostility of this man towards the house of

Penarvon. Eustace sometimes doubted whether he should ever retain Saul's confidence if he were to succeed to the dukedom one day, as was probable. As it was, Saul seemed able to dis sever the man from his name and race; but how long this might be the case was an open question.

At any rate, Saul would not work with Eustace, and he worked on lines absolutely independent, if not openly hostile. There was a section in the town which was quite disposed to make an idol of the young fellow, who had undergone a term of imprisonment and suffered so much in the cause of justice and liberty.

This section was not one which commanded many votes; but the voice of numbers always makes itself felt, and Saul was possessed of a rude eloquence which commanded attention; and publicans began to find that, if Saul was going to address a meeting in the evening, it was sure to be largely attended by a class of customers who brought grist to the mill. The operatives from the mills—now finding that the hated machinery was a friend rather than a foe to them, and almost all of them working again there—rallied round Saul to a man. They liked to have as their spokesman and champion a man of his grand physique and of a power of expression so much in advance of their own. They always came to hear him speak, and he was gradually becoming something of a power in the place. It is true that his addresses were of so inflammatory a character that they were often followed by a demonstration or a small riot which was alarming to the more orderly inhabitants; but, at election times, people made up their mind to disturbances, and tried to regard them philosophically as the natural concomitants of the crisis.

The scenes presented by the hustings as the election day drew on were increasingly lively and animated. Eustace came home one day with his coat half torn off

his back, having adventured himself rather unwisely down a side alley where some considerable body of rabid socialists had gathered to listen to one of their own number denouncing anything and everything in the past systems of government with a beautiful impartiality. He often returned soiled and dragged, sometimes with a cut on the face or hands. Sir Roland did not escape some of these amenities either, and declared with good-humoured amusement that it promised to be the most lively election he could remember.

The excitement became so acute as the day drew on, that even Bride caught the infection of it, and was more aroused from her dreamy life of silent meditation and prayer than she had ever been before. Not that she ceased to pray constantly and earnestly for the victory of the righteous cause—whichever that should be; but she spent less time in silent musing and meditation, and more in the study of those papers and journals which told her of the questions of the day, and the aim and ultimate object of this hot party strife.

When the polling day really came, and her father settled to drive in in the coach, taking Eustace with him—Sir Roland had his rooms at the hotel in Pentreath, and had ceased to make headquarters at the castle—Bride suddenly asked to accompany the party, a request so foreign to her ordinary habits that both the men looked at her in surprise.

"It will be very noisy and rowdy in the town," said Eustace, "and we may get into some street-fights, and have a warm reception ourselves. Would you not be better and safer at home?"

"I should like to see the town at election time," answered Bride, "and I should like to be with my father."

The Duke was surprised, and said a few words to dissuade her, but finding her really bent upon it, gave

way. He did not anticipate anything very different to-day from what he had experienced at other elections, and his daughter would go straight to the hotel where Sir Roland's committee-room was situated, and would remain there till he drove out again. He himself would go early to the poll and register his vote, and then come back and await the news which from time to time would be brought in. He did not intend to remain late, to remain till the result was announced; but he would spend a few hours in the place, and gain a general idea how the fortunes of the day were going.

The town presented an extraordinary appearance to Bride, as the great coach rumbled through its streets, ordinarily so quiet and silent and sleepy. The whole place was alive. It seemed as though every inhabitant of the town and neighbourhood was abroad in the streets, and shouts and yells, hootings and cheers, greeted the appearance of the ducal equipage as it turned every corner. On the whole, however, the crowd seemed jovial and good-tempered, and although Bride shrank back sometimes in vague distress and alarm at the sound of certain hoarse cries which assailed her ears, she was aroused and interested by all she saw. The carriage passed through the streets without molestation, though with many needful halts on account of the congested state of the traffic, till it stopped at the hotel, and the Duke handed out his daughter amid the cheering of a large crowd, which had gathered there in the expectation of hearing some speeches from Sir Roland. Bride was glad to hide herself in the building; but was soon provided with a chair near the window, from which she could look out into the market-place below. Sheltered by a curtain, she could see without being seen. The room opened by one of its long windows upon the great square balcony formed by the roof of the projecting porch; and from time

to time Sir Roland, or one of his coadjutors, stepped out upon this balcony and made a short speech, always received with vociferous applause. When it was known that the Duke had arrived, there were many shouts for him; and at last he gratified the people by going forward, and making a brief but able little speech, in which encouragement and warning were blended in a way that produced an obvious effect, and set the people thinking.

Eustace made a speech to which Bride listened with undivided attention; and never for a moment did he forget that she was listening, and seldom perhaps had he spoken better, or so eloquently advocated his entire belief in the use of the best and noblest weapons only, in the noble cause to which they were pledged. When he came in again, after being warmly applauded from without, she gave him a glance which set his heart bounding and his pulses throbbing; but he had no time for speech then, as the Duke wished to go to the poll at once, and he accompanied him to try and ward off anything like personal attack or insult; for he was by no means sure what Saul and his band of malcontents were up to; and his own presence at the side of his kinsman would be the greatest protection from any disagreeable interlude.

Bride remained in the hotel, sometimes watching the animated scene without, sometimes exchanging courtesies with the gentlemen of the county who came in and out, some accompanied by their wives, who, like Bride, had come to see what was going on, and who were pleased to see the girl again after her long period of seclusion following on her mother's last illness and death.

Luncheon was spread in a room below, and partaken of as the appetite or convenience of the guests suggested. The Duke returned from the poll with tidings

so far favourable to their candidate. But it was too early to feel any security; and the supporters of the Viscount were rallying bravely round him, and talking grandly of carrying the seat in the Tory interest in face of all Radical and time-serving opposition.

At two o'clock, however, things were still looking well for Sir Roland, and better still at three. The Viscount's poll remained almost stationary now, and the Radical candidate was left far behind. True, his supporters were mainly those likely to register their votes later in the day, but on the whole there was a feeling in the minds of Sir Roland and his committee that the day was going very well for them, and the cheering and enthusiasm outside, whenever news from the poll was received, was loud and increasing.

But the Duke, though keenly interested in the contest, was not desirous of remaining much longer. He wished to get home before the mills ceased work, and the operatives came pouring out. At any rate, he wished to be clear of the town by that time; and when he was told that to-day many of the mills were to close at four o'clock, he quickly ordered his carriage to be got ready, for there was not too much time to spare.

It took time, with the yard so full of vehicles and the stables so overcrowded, to get the great coach out and equipped; and Eustace suddenly resolved that he would at least make one of the party in it on its way through the streets. The hands of the clock were drawing rapidly on to the hour of four, and still the coach could not be got free of the yard. Then a messenger from the poll came tearing up with news of farther advances for Sir Roland, and some more congratulations and cheering had to be gone through, whilst the crowd, surging up closer and closer round the hotel, made egress for the moment practically impossible. Before the horses were in and the start accomplished, the clocks

had boomed out the hour of four some ten minutes since; and as Eustace looked out through the window at the crowded state of the streets, and the threatening aspect of the operatives swarming round them, he wished they had cleared the precincts of the town some half-hour ago, but was very glad he was in the carriage.

They had turned out of the main thoroughfare, where progress was almost impossible, on account of its proximity to the polling booth, and were making their way down a narrow alley, when a sudden sound of hooting and yelling broke upon their ears, and Eustace, trained to such things, detected a note of menace in it which he feared was directed against the well-known carriage of the Duke. This suspicion was heightened by the conduct of the coachman on the box, who suddenly lashed his horses into a mad gallop, as though the man felt that this was the only chance of getting through some barrier suddenly raised before them.

This manœuvre was received with a howl and a yell. The next moment, the carriage lurched violently, the horses plunged and kicked in wild terror. Cries, groans, and curses arose in deafening tumult around the carriage, and Bride half started up, exclaiming—

“They are trampling down the people. Eustace, stop the horses! Tell the coachman to pull up! They must not hurt the people! See that they do not! See if any one is hurt!”

There was no fear in her face, only a great compassion and anxiety. But before Eustace could make any move or answer, the horses had been brought to a standstill by the hands of the mob, and the wild and enraged people were yelling and surging round the carriage in a fashion which could not but remind all its occupants of scenes they had heard described as having taken place in France during the days of the uprising of the populace there.

Bride sank back in her seat, pale, but with a look of

quiet resolution, which bespoke the high courage of her race. The Duke put out his hand and took his daughter's in its clasp, but remained otherwise perfectly quiet and unmoved. His fine old face regarded the tumult without a change or a quiver; his eyes looked quietly, though rather sternly, out from beneath the pent-house of his bushy brows, and his lips looked a little thin and grim. The men on the box were making a gallant fight, laying about them right and left with the great whip and with the reins, whose buckled end made no bad weapon when whirled round the head of some approaching ruffian. But these demonstrations only provoked the crowd to wilder fury, and Eustace knew not whether to open the door and remonstrate with both parties, or reserve his words for any attack likely to be made upon the party inside. It was a terribly anxious moment for him, knowing as he did the temper of the people, and the terrible lengths to which angry passions will drive furious and disappointed men. It was very plain that these turbulent malcontents had heard that Sir Roland seemed carrying the day; and their native bitterness towards all persons of rank and station was intensified fourfold by the discouraging news just made known.

A large stone came crashing in through the window, shivering the glass to fragments, and sending the sharp morsels flying round the occupants in a most dangerous fashion.

"Come out of that!—give up your coach to proper uses!" cried rough voices in every key. "Down with the tyrants and oppressors! Down with all dukes and baronets and fine gentlemen!"

Eustace looked out of the window with flaming eyes.

"Men!" he cried in a loud voice—and for a moment his well-known face and voice arrested attention and respect, "be men!—not brutes! There is a lady with us. Respect her womanhood, if you cannot respect her station ;

and let us pass in peace. You do not make war on women. Be men, and let us through. I will go with you if you will; but not till you have promised not to molest this carriage."

A mocking roar was the answer; those behind set it going, and the whole crowd took it up.

"You!—and what are you, pray?—a turncoat—a deserter—a trimmer!"—and at that word a yell went up transcending anything that had gone before.

"Trimmer!—trimmer!—traitor!" was bawled and yelled on all sides, and then there arose such a hubbub as cannot be described, a hubbub in which no articulate words could be detected, save oaths of blasphemous import, which made Bride whiten and shiver as no sense of personal peril could do. Eustace better analysed the meaning of those shouts and yells and cries, and turning to the Duke, he said, "I think we must leave the carriage. If we were alone we might sit it out and brave them; but we have a lady with us, and it will not do to provoke them too far. They will stop short, I fully believe, at personal violence, and there is a house just opposite where they are making friendly signals to us, and will give us shelter if we can reach the door. Bride, will you be afraid to face the mob for one minute? They will howl and yell; but they will not molest you—they shall not! Come!—there is no time to lose."

Indeed there was not. A new sound arose, a sound of more hooting and yelling, as though a new crowd was upon them; and as this fresh noise smote upon the ears of the mob round the carriage, it became mingled with a new war-cry, and Eustace distinguished the shout of "Saul Tresithny!—Saul Tresithny!" mingling with other sounds.

If indeed it were Saul coming upon them, he would be most likely heading the wildest crew in the town. Eustace looked suddenly pale but intensely resolute as he flung

open the door of the carriage and sprang out, before the people were prepared for the action.

“You shall have the carriage, men,” he said, “but make way for *this* lady to pass;” and he gave his hand to Bride, who came out with her simple air of quiet fearless dignity, and stood for a second regarding the surging crowd with such a great compassion in her eyes, that those nearest involuntarily fell back, and not a sound arose from any but the hinder ranks, as the Duke and his daughter passed through the mob and gained the friendly shelter of the humble house which Eustace had recognised as a place where they would find shelter.

Was it the fearless dignified bearing of the old nobleman, or the gentle self-possession of the girl? Eustace wondered, and could not say. All he knew was that for the brief moment of the transit there was comparative silence and tranquillity; and the Duke showed no sign of nervous haste as he paused to direct the coachman and footman to cease ineffectual resistance and to come also within doors.

Then he followed Eustace and Bride with firm and quiet bearing, whilst just as the door closed behind the whole party, the hootings and yells redoubled in fury, mingling freely with the name which seemed to infuse fresh life into the howling mob—the name of Saul Tresithny.





CHAPTER XVII

THE DUKE'S CARRIAGE

TWO hours later Bride looked up with an eager air, for she had heard the sound of a familiar footstep on the stair, and knew that she should have tidings at last.

She was comfortably established in a small parlour over a shop, and was making friends with a pair of solemn-looking little children, who were strangely fascinated by, though half afraid of, the pretty stranger lady. The house which had opened its door to the Duke's party—and had had several windows broken in consequence—belonged to some humble tradespeople, and they had put everything in their house at the disposal of the Duke and his daughter, and had done all in their power to make them comfortable during the brief time which they had been forced to remain prisoners, owing to the presence of the howling mob without. Then when the crowd was diverted to some other spot, and had left this little street empty, Bride had still been left in the security of this humble abode, whilst the Duke and Eustace made their way back to the hotel, promising to return for her when the kidnapped carriage should have been recovered, and they could make another attempt to quit the town.

Bride had passed these two hours somewhat anxiously—her anxiety being for her father and Eustace, not for

herself. The grocer's two big lads, who acted the part of scouts, and ran in and out with items of news, reported that there was much excitement and rioting going on in the town now that all the mill hands were at liberty, and the supporters of the Radical candidate going to the poll. Sometimes sounds of distant yelling and hooting broke upon the ears of the listening girl, and sent a thrill through her frame. Sometimes there was a rush of growling operatives down the narrow street where she had found shelter, and for a moment her heart would stand still in expectation of an attack upon this very house; but the worthy people who had sheltered her took it all very quietly, and were not at all seriously disturbed. They said it was always so at election times, and smiled at the notion of there being any danger to dread.

So Bride had sipped the tea brought to her, and begged for the company of the two little children when their mother was obliged to go to her duties below. The time passed somewhat wearily and anxiously, but at last the sound of a familiar footstep without warned her that her time of waiting was at an end.

The door opened and Eustace entered, his face pale, his left arm in a sling, his clothes, though not exactly torn, and evidently carefully brushed, showing traces that their owner had been in some sort of skirmish or riot. The girl sprang up anxiously at sight of him, her face blanching a little.

"My father——?" she began, her lips forming the words, though her voice was barely a whisper. Eustace's smile reassured her.

"He is quite safe. He will be here soon with a coach to take you safely home. He has not been in any of the troubles; he has been in the hotel ever since he left you. We got there by the back way without any difficulty; but the town was too disturbed for it to be

advisable to attempt to drive out till some sort of order had been restored."

"But you are hurt," said Bride, with a look at the slung arm; "what have you been doing?"

"Oh, it is nothing," answered Eustace, as he sat down to tell his tale, for he had been on his feet the best part of the day and was very fatigued; "only a little crushed and mangled—no bone broken. I could not keep within doors when so much that was exciting was going on without, and I was in the thick of the *mêlée* once. Poor Saul Tresithny fared worse than I. I am afraid he will never walk again. They are taking him to his grandfather's house to be cared for: we thought it was the best thing to do. Poor fellow! poor fellow!—such a fine character run to waste! He might have done much for the cause of liberty and advancement; but he would not listen to aught save his own wild passions."

Bride clasped her hands and looked earnestly at Eustace.

"Tell me what has happened," she said breathlessly.

"I will tell you as much as I know myself. You are aware, of course, that to get possession of your father's carriage and drag all the Radical voters to the poll in it was considered the most wonderful triumph over us and our man. As soon as you were safely out of the way, the mob turned its attention to the spoil they had confiscated. A young blacksmith who could drive was put on the box; the colours were torn from the horses and replaced by others; and the equipage was sent dashing all over the town, returning each time crammed inside and out with the shabbiest and least reputable voters that could be found, the snorting, terrified, foaming horses being goaded almost to madness by the shouting and the blows they received, and threatening again and again to become altogether unmanageable."

"Poor creatures!" said Bride softly; "I hope they have not been hurt. My father would be grieved."

"I think they will not be the worse in the end. They are on their homeward way now with their own coachman driving them, and poor Saul lies groaning in the torn and ruined carriage, being taken to his grandfather's cottage by the wish of the Duke. It is doubtful whether he will live through the effects of this day's work; and your father wished him to be taken to Abner, as the only person likely to exercise the smallest influence over him."

"Ah! poor Abner!" said Bride, with compassion; and looking again at Eustace, she said, "Go on, please; tell me the rest."

"Well, as far as I understand the matter, it was like this. Saul and his satellites were in possession of the Duke's carriage, and acted as a sort of bodyguard whilst it made its journeys through the town. But as soon as it was recognised by the other side as being the Duke's coach, and rumour spread abroad the report of how it had been taken from his Grace and put to these vile purposes, a counter-demonstration was at once organised. A mob of men wearing the colours not only of Sir Roland but of the Viscount, combined together to effect the rescue of the carriage, and very soon this ill-fated vehicle became the centre of a continuous and never-ceasing furious riot. It still remained in the possession of Saul's men, but it was hemmed in by a crowd of enemies; and though by sheer weight and dogged power of resistance it was driven to and fro between the polling place and the town streets, its progress became with each succeeding journey more difficult, and the fighting around it hotter and hotter."

"How extraordinary people are!" said Bride, with a light shiver, "as though it did any good to make these fearful disturbances and riots. Do they really think any

cause will be benefited by such things? It seems all so strange and sad."

"At least it seems the outcome of ordinary human nature at such times," answered Eustace. "I did not know much about what was going on for some time, but by-and-bye word was brought that the fighting over the carriage was getting really rather serious. Once it had been taken possession of by the rival rabble, and was being borne back in triumph to the hotel to be put once more at the service of its owner; but then Saul led a tremendous charge with his roughs, and the fortunes of the day turned once more in his favour. Things in the town were getting so serious that some soldiers had been brought in under Captain O'Shaughnessy, and were drawn up in readiness not far off. But we all hoped there would be no need for their interference, and I thought I would go down and see what it was all about, and, if it was possible, draw off our own adherents from the unseemly riot."

"And that was how you got hurt?" said Bride.

"Yes; perhaps I was foolish to suppose that one man, and that myself, could do any good at such a moment; but I think one has a natural desire to be in the thick of everything, and I knew that I should not come to harm, if Saul Tresithny could help it. I went down and out into the street. The noise told me that the carriage could not be far away, and very soon I had forced myself into the thick of the fight, hoping, when I got between the combatants, to induce Saul on the one side to draw off his men, whilst I urged those of our own supporters who had joined in the scrimmage to retire from the unseemly disturbance. But things had gone much too far for any pacific endeavours on my part. I do not know exactly in whose possession the carriage was at the moment when I reached it; and the press round it and the fighting was so fierce and indiscriminate that I could hardly move

or breathe, let alone trying to make my voice heard. And soon I was recognised by one great fellow as an enemy, and a new element of fury was added to the struggle; but what really made the danger, and caused the damage at last, was a sudden shout raised at the back of the crowd that the soldiers were coming."

"Ah!" breathed Bride softly.

"I suppose the man on the box of the carriage saw over our heads that it was true, for he suddenly deserted his post, and flung himself down to the ground; whilst the horses, feeling the sudden jerk of the reins, and then the slackness which followed, set to plunging and kicking wildly, scattering the mob right and left, and knocking down at least half-a-dozen of the crowd, as they swerved and tried to turn, before bolting off in their terror. Saul saw the peril to every one, rushed forward and made a gallant spring at their heads; but he was knocked down and trampled upon in a fearful way, before I and a few others could come to his assistance and get to the heads of the horses. When we brought them to a standstill at last, I had got my arm crushed, I shall never know exactly how; and the other fellows had all got bruises or cuts of one sort or another. As for poor Tresithny, he lay on the ground like one dead, his head bleeding, one foot so crushed that I fear he will never walk again, and with other injuries of quite as grave a character. But the mob had scattered helter-skelter by that time, and the soldiers, with their bayonets fixed, were quietly bearing down through the street, clearing a path before them, as a gale of wind clears away the fog wreaths through a valley."

"They did not hurt the people—they did not fire?"

"Oh, no; they behaved very well and good-temperedly, for they were a good bit pelted and hooting at starting, I heard. They just fixed their bayonets, and marched quietly

on in rank, and the mob dispersed more quickly than one would suppose possible. I think the fall of poor Tresithny, and the rumour that he was dead, frightened and discouraged the crowd, and perhaps they had had enough of it by that time. At any rate, by the time the soldiers reached us the street was almost clear; and after we had soothed and quieted the poor horses, who were in a lather from head to foot and quaking in every limb, they had picked up Tresithny tenderly enough, and laid him in the carriage, making a sort of bed for him there with all the cushions. It did not matter then that the poor fellow was bleeding, and that his clothes were covered with dust and mud: the carriage was in such a state inside and out that nothing could harm it more. When we had placed him there, we led the horses to the hotel yard, and your father was told everything, and came down to look for himself at the state of the equipage, and at the prostrate leader of the mob."

"And he sent him home to Abner?" said Bride, with a soft light in her eyes.

"Yes. We got a surgeon to look at him without moving him, and he bound up the wound on his head, and cut away the boot from the crushed foot. He would not have him taken out of the carriage or moved in any way till he could be put straight to bed; and after the horses had been groomed and fed, the coachman was called for, and directed to drive young Tresithny to his grandfather's cottage, the surgeon going in the carriage with him."

"Poor Abner!" said Bride once more; "but it will be the happiest thing for him to have Saul under his own roof."

"That is what your father said. So two soldiers were told off to see the carriage safe out of the town, and there is a sharp patrol of the streets being kept up to prevent any more organised rioting. I think the disturbers of

the peace have had enough of it by this time. There is the ordinary scrimmaging and hustling about the poll, but that is quite a different thing from the desperate fighting and blackguardism that was going on round the Duke's carriage. And now I have come to tell you that you will soon be called for and taken home. The hotel has furnished us with a coach to drive back in, and Captain O'Shaughnessy himself will accompany us out of the town to make sure there is no more rioting about us."

"And how is the poll going?"

"Well for us. Mr. Morval has polled a large number of votes these past two hours, but Sir Roland still holds his own. So far as one may guess till the end has come, I should say he was quite safe for the seat; though I think his majority will be considerably reduced, as is natural, seeing how the party split. Things might have been much worse under such circumstances."

The rattle of wheels below announced the arrival of the promised coach, and Bride took her departure, after having made acknowledgment of all kinds to the friendly people who had given her shelter. She found her father looking fagged and worn, but quiet and tranquil, and the journey home was accomplished without any farther disturbance.

Early next morning news reached the castle that Sir Roland had won the seat by a reduced though still substantial majority. The other piece of news was that Saul Tresithny had lived through the night, and, though very much injured, might still survive, only that he must lose his foot. It was so crushed and mangled and dislocated that nothing could be done for it. If his life were to be saved, the foot must go.

Bride went down herself to see Abner and make personal inquiries. The old man looked very pale and grave, but was quiet and composed.

"It may be, my Ladybird, that the Lord has sent this in mercy and not in wrath," he said. "There's many a one as has found the door of the fold in the time of weakness and sorrow and pain, that never could see it when things were otherwise with him. It is better to enter into life maimed than to lose the hope of salvation for this life and the next. Pray God he will turn to Him at last in this dark hour, when he could not make shift to see the way before."

"Ah! I hope so!—I trust so," said Bride softly. "That is why I am so glad for him to be with you and not amongst strangers. You can point the way; you can tell him of the hope. When his life here looks so dark before him, perhaps he will turn at last to the hope of the glory and blessedness that will be revealed in the kingdom. I do not see how men can live without that hope, when the things of earth fail them, and show how hollow and empty they always are."

Abner smiled with a look on his face in which hope and sorrow were strangely blended. He knew better than this girl could do the hardness of the human heart and the stubborn toughness of a nature like Saul's, and yet he would not despond.

"The Great Gardener never takes the pruning-knife but for the good of the plant He is about to prune," he said. "It's hard sometimes to watch the living tree cut away from the stem, but in days to come one sees and knows why it was needful. We can but live in faith that it will be so with these poor frail bodies of ours."

"Does he know?" asked Bride, with a little shiver.

"No, he has never come to his senses yet, and I am hoping he won't until it is all over. The doctor will come this afternoon with another gentleman, and then 'twill be done quick and sharp. I'm hoping and praying

it will all be over before the poor lad comes rightly to himself."

Bride spent that day mostly alone, and much of it in prayer. Her father, wearied out by the fatigues and excitements of yesterday, kept to his room, and Eustace had gone into Pentreath to see Sir Roland.

It was evening when a message from Abner was brought to the girl to tell her that the operation was over successfully, and that the patient was sleeping quietly under the influence of an opiate.

That evening she and Eustace dined alone together, the Duke preferring to keep still to his room. It was a soft clear evening in May, and the sunlight lay broad and bright upon the sparkling water as they passed out, at Eustace's suggestion, upon the terrace, and sat there watching the beautiful pageantry of the evening sky. Eustace looked pale and tired, and there was a touch of gentle solicitude in Bride's manner towards him that sent quick thrills through all his pulses. Those weeks just passed had not been too full of other interests and excitements to blind Eustace to the fact that Bride was still the one woman of all others for him. He had not spoken a single word of love to her all this while, and she gave no sign of remembering what had once passed between them; but the thought of it was strong in his mind to-night, and he was wondering with an intensity of feeling whether he might venture upon expressing some of those many thoughts and hopes which always came crowding upon him in the presence of his cousin when they were alone together.

She had told him all she knew of Saul—they could talk of him, at any rate; and both were keenly interested in the young man, and deeply grieved at the terrible injury he had received.

"If it had been in a good cause, it would have been easier to bear, I think," she said. "But a street-

fight—in the display of brute violence and unmeaning hostility—ah! it makes me so sad even to think of it!”

“I think it was better than that, Bride,” said Eustace. “I think, when Saul sprang at that great pair of plunging horses, he was trying to hinder mischief and hurt for others. I think he was trying to save me, for one, for I was very near. He had been fighting and leading rioters; but I think he fell in the cause of humanity and charity; I think he deliberately sacrificed himself for others.”

Bride's eyes lightened and glistened.

“Oh, I am glad of that—I am very glad. I must tell Abner.”

There was silence for a few minutes between them, and then Eustace said in a low voice—

“Bride, you will let me know how it goes with him, and what sort of a recovery he makes. Your father is not very likely to mention it in his letters; but will you write now and then yourself, and tell me how it fares with Saul?”

She looked up quickly.

“Then are you going, Eustace?”

“I must go soon, quite soon, Bride. I do not know exactly when this new Parliament will first meet. The polling in the country is not over yet, but it soon will be now; and there is much to learn and to discuss before the House meets. I cannot delay much longer, now that I have a seat of my own.”

“No, I had forgotten for a moment. Of course, you are a member of Parliament now.”

He looked at her rather searchingly.

“Bride—tell me that you do not despise me for it?”

“Oh, no, Eustace, I do not despise you. I hope I do not despise anybody. I think it is very sad that men and

women should ever hate or despise each other. We have all our faults and our imperfections. We ought to be very gentle and loving and patient."

He wished she would be just a little less impersonal in her replies; and yet he could not wish her other than she was. He put out his hand and laid it softly on hers.

"Bride," he said, "you have not given me the promise I asked for."

"She did not take her hand away, but let his lie upon it as they sat together in the soft evening light. She turned her sweet face towards him. It was not flushed, and was very calm and tranquil; yet, deep down in those liquid dark eyes there was a look which sent the blood coursing through his veins in a fashion that made him giddy for a moment. Yet he showed nothing outwardly, and she saw nothing to alarm her or drive her into herself.

"What promise?" she asked softly.

"To write to me sometimes when I am far away."

"To tell you about Saul?" she added quietly. "Yes, Eustace, I will do that very willingly."

"Thank you, Bride; but do not let your letters be restricted to news of Saul only. You will tell me of other things. You will tell me of St. Bride, St. Erme, of the St. Aubyns, Mr. Tremodart, of yourself."

"I will tell you any news that I think will interest you," she answered. "But you know there is little to happen at Penarvon. Nothing ever happens to me that would interest you."

"Indeed, you are wrong there," he answered with suppressed eagerness; "everything that happens to you is of the greatest possible interest to me."

"I hardly think so," she said musingly; "for you see one day here is outwardly just like another. Except at such times as these, there are no external

events ; and I do not think you take account of any but outward things—no one can speak of what is inward and spiritual to one who does not understand.”

“ And you think that I do not understand such things, Bride ? ”

Her glance into his face was very steady and searching.

“ I do not *think* you do—yet,” she answered ; “ I may be wrong, but we generally feel those things. You have an intellectual life—a much deeper and fuller one than mine ; but I think you have starved your spiritual life for a great many years. I think you have tried to judge all things spiritual by your intellectual standard, and all the things that cannot be made to agree with your philosophy are set aside as superstitions. I often think that the pride many men take in being above superstition is one of the subtlest and most destructive weapons the devil has ever forged. What is superstition ? I have been told that long, long ago, it was almost the same in meaning as religion. It certainly means a belief in the unseen—in the powers of good and evil, in the mysterious actions of God—and of the devil—with regard to the children of men. But everything too deep or mysterious for human comprehension may be called superstition by those whose spiritual insight is blunted, and who have no experience of God’s dealing in the hearts of individual men. I know that hundreds and thousands of clever men call it superstition when they hear of men and women believing in special providences of God—believing that prayer is answered for such things as rainfall or drought or epidemic sickness. Others call it superstition when they are told of the coming kingdom of Christ and His Second Coming in glory, of which the Apostles constantly wrote and spoke, and which long ago the Early Church hoped to see. It is all so very, very sad to me when I

think of it. Ah! Eustace, if you could but see the beautiful truth of God with eyes unclouded by the mists of your worldly philosophy! I sometimes think and believe that you will do so yet; but I do not think men can ever shake off the scales from their eyes until they begin to know that scales are there. Whilst they think it is their eyes that see, and their souls that embrace true wisdom, how can the Spirit of God find a home in their hearts? It is those who pray, 'Lord, that I might receive my sight!' who feel the Saviour's hand laid upon them, and go away seeing."

Eustace sat perfectly still, with his eyes fixed upon Bride's face. A quick strange thrill went through him at her words, as it had done many times before when she was speaking with him. But during these past busy weeks there had been no talk of this sort between the cousins; and Eustace felt with a sensation of surprise, and almost of exultation, how far more responsive was his heart now when such words fell on his ear, than it had been months ago—a year ago, when she had sometimes spoken in this strain, and he had smiled to himself at her mystic fanaticism.

She had certainly come gradually to a clearer appreciation of what was going on in the world, and to a juster estimate of the good and the evil of the movements of the day. He often felt her increased power of sympathy and comprehension, and rejoiced in it; but had he too changed on his side, and were they really growing nearer together in all things? He no longer felt disposed to smile when she spoke words like these; rather he longed for her purity of faith and singleness of heart, and felt that she possessed a reserve of power and strength that was in many respects greater than his own. Where he would be led away by self-interest, she would see with perfect clearness of vision. Where he would be influenced by a partisan spirit to fail in discrimination, and adopt the

evil with the good without analysis or reflection, she would detect at once all that was impure and unworthy, and refuse contact with it, even at the price of personal loss. It was, perhaps, impossible for a man in the vortex of political life and a keen party struggle to keep his heart perfectly pure, and always be found on the side of right, and the opponent of wrong in every phase; but at least she had inspired him with this desire as he had never known it before; and he began to understand—what once he would not have believed—that she gained this insight and this purity of heart and motive through the workings of that spiritual nature which had been such a perplexity to him before.

“Bride,” he said at last, in a strange voice, which he hardly knew for his own, “you almost persuaded me to ask for that power of vision myself.”

Her eyes lighted with a strange radiance, though they were not turned to him, but out over the sea.

“I think it is never asked in vain,” she said softly, “if it is asked in humble repentant faith.”

“You will have to teach me, Bride, for I am very ignorant in all these things.”

“I cannot teach you,” she answered softly, “though, perhaps, I can help you with my prayers. Only the Spirit of God can guide you into all truth. He will lead you to the cross of the Crucified One first, and then by gradual steps to the knowledge of the Risen, the Ascended, the Glorified Lord, for whose bright and glorious coming we and all creation are waiting in patient confidence and joyful hope.”

He was silent. He could not follow her yet into these regions, but faint stirrings of the desire to do so were working in him. Once he had thought, “I must draw her down to earth and my level;” now, the unconscious aspiration of his mind was, “Would that I might follow her there!” But all he said was—

"Do you pray for me, then, Bride?"

"Always," she answered softly; and although Eustace went in having spoken no word of love (as he had almost intended at the outset), he felt that he and Bride had never been so near together as at that moment.





CHAPTER XVIII

ABNER'S PATIENT

EUSTACE went back to London about ten days after the election at Pentreath. Parliament was to meet in June, and there was much of importance to be discussed beforehand. He and Sir Roland travelled in company, and the Duke's farewell was warmer and more cordial by many degrees than it had been on the occasion of his last departure. As for Bride, there had been something so sweet and subtly tender in their relations during the past few days, that the parting with her was wonderfully hard. Eustace lay awake the whole of his last night at the castle, thinking of her, and wondering how he could bear to say adieu; and when they met in the morning, her eyes were heavy and her face was sorrowful, as though she too had kept vigil and dreaded the coming day. In point of fact, Bride had kept vigil in a very literal fashion, for she had been kneeling in prayer for Eustace very many hours of that summer's night—praying that he might be delivered from any and all of those perils which might happen to the body whilst travelling through an excited country; but above all, praying that he might be kept safe in those assaults of evil that might assail and hurt the soul—that he might be strong to resist temptation, that he might be the champion always for good, yet discriminate and dis-

cern the moment when evil crept in, and where party spirit took the place of the true desire after the best welfare of the nation. She understood far better than she had done a year ago the difficulties of that strife, and where once she would have stood aloof with a sense of pained disappointment and disapproval, she would now, as it were, stretch forward a helping hand, and strive to show the firm path amid all the quagmires of strife and emulation. As she clasped hands with Eustace for the last time, and their eyes met, some strange electric current seemed to pass between them, and, as though in answer to spoken words, he said, in a low moved tone—

“I will be true—I will be faithful—I will strive to fight the good fight, and you will be my best helper.”

She did not answer with her lips, but her eyes made amends for that. Suddenly Eustace came one step nearer, put both his hands upon her shoulders, and bent his head and kissed her on the lips. For a single second she started, as though the touch of his hands had alarmed her, but the next moment she looked straight into his eyes, and yielded her lips to his for that last salute.

“God be with you, Eustace,” she whispered; and as the young man rode away he felt he understood for the first time in his life the true meaning and application of the simple and oft-used phrase, “Good-bye.”

Bride stood where he had left her, in the middle of that anteroom where their parting had been exchanged. Her face was slightly flushed; there was a strange gleam of vivid light in her eyes; the sweet mouth was tremulous with emotions strongly stirred. The Duke, who had witnessed the parting between them, looked at her with a veiled inquiry in his eyes. Bride, coming back to everyday life, saw that look and answered it.

“It is not what you think, papa,” she said very softly, “yet I think Eustace and I belong to one another now. I do not know how else to say it. It seems as

though there was something linking us together stronger than ourselves."

A slight smile lighted the old man's face.

"I am glad to hear that, my child," he said gently. "I am far better pleased with Eustace this time than I was before. He has greatly grown in wisdom and moderation—greatly improved. I believe he will turn out one of those men whom the world needs. He is after all a Marchmont, and the Marchmonts have generally the gift of government in some form or another. A young and ardent temperament may be led astray at the outset; but the experience of life gives ballast; and there seem to have been many influences at work upon Eustace, moderating his impetuosity, and showing him the reverse side of the shield."

"I think he is learning a great deal," answered Bride softly; "I am glad you feel the same about him."

She could not settle to her ordinary avocations that day. There was a subtle sense of exhilaration and happiness in her pulses which made active exercise needful to her. She had her pony saddled, and started to ride along the cliffs to St. Erme. She wanted to be alone for awhile to think and muse upon the sudden sense of new happiness that had come into her life. She had visits to pay at St. Erme's which had been waiting for a day of leisure. Eustace had filled much of her time of late, but now she must learn to do without him. She rode quietly onward, with the sunshine about her, and the soft breeze fanning her cheek and lighting her eyes. There came over her, almost for the first time in her life, a sense of the beauty and joyousness of it, even in this fallen world of sorrow and sin. Before she had thought, almost exclusively at such times as these, when alone with nature and at peace with herself and all the world, of the brightness and glory of the Kingdom. Her heart had had little here to feed itself upon, and she had dwelt in the thought of

the glory which shall be revealed. But to-day she felt as though she was experiencing a strange foretaste of that glory and happiness in this inexpressible sense of sweetness and love. An atmosphere of joy seemed to envelop and envelop her. She scarcely understood herself or her heart; but she was happy with a happiness that was almost startling, and in her head some words seemed to set themselves to the joyous hymn that nature was singing all the while.

"I will be faithful---I will be true!" . . . "God be with you!"

Her absorption of mind did not hinder her from paying her visits and entering with full sympathy and tenderness into the trials and troubles of those she had come to see. The sight of her was always very welcome to the simple people who had known her from childhood, and who regarded her something as an angel visitor, as they had regarded her mother before her.

Her visits paid, she was about to turn homewards, when, as she was passing the gate of the rectory, she encountered Mr. St. Aubyn riding forth on his sturdy cob. They exchanged greetings gladly.

"I am on my way to St. Bride," he said, smiling. "Shall we go in company? or are you coming to pay a visit to my wife?"

"I think I will ride back with you," said Bride, "and see Mrs. St. Aubyn another day. It will be too hot to be out with comfort if I linger longer. Are you coming to the castle?"

"My errand is to your gardener's cottage. My good friend Mr. Tremodart has asked me to visit young Tre-sithny in his terrible affliction. He seems to close his heart and his lips against all the world. My kind friend at the parsonage thought I might have more success in dealing with him; but I fear me the time has not yet come when the words of man will avail aught."

Bride's face was very sorrowful.

"It seems so sad," she said softly, "so very, very sad. Oh, I am grieved for Abner. He looks aged and bowed like an old man, yet his faith never fails. He is a lesson to us all. 'The child of many prayers,' he calls Saul, and he will not give up hope. But it must be terrible for him to have to sit by and hear the poor young man shouting out all sorts of horrible imprecations and blasphemies in his delirium and pain. No one can tell whether he quite knows what he is saying; but his words are terrible to hear. Widow Curnow has come to help to nurse him, and I hear almost more from her than from Abner. I hoped he would have been able to see my cousin Eustace before he went to London; but he has never been enough himself, and all excitement has to be avoided. I believe Eustace has the most influence upon him of any person in the world. He has won his affection, and I fear poor Saul knows more of hatred than of love towards the world at large."

"He has had a very sad life," said the clergyman sorrowfully, "a life of spiritual revolt against the very conditions of his existence, as well as a mental and physical revolt against the wrongs of a world which can never be set truly right, save by the advent of One to whom in their blindness these would-be reformers never look for guidance, still less join in the cry for Him to appear and take the reins of government Himself. It is sorrowful to think of—that the very men most forward in the struggle to do justice to their fellow-men, are often the most careless about giving God His dues. They will render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, but will they render to God the things that are God's? How often, as one hears them speak or reads the words they are speaking to the nation, does one say in one's heart, 'Lord, open their eyes so that they may see!' for philanthropy alone will never raise or purify the world; it must be joined with a living

faith in a living God, and the first love and service of our hearts must belong to God; the second, given to our neighbours."

Bride looked with a sudden questioning wistfulness into the clergyman's face.

"Mr. St. Aubyn, do you not think that a man who loves mankind with a true and unselfish love must somewhere in the depths of his heart have a love for God also, even though he may not know it? Is not love in its essence Divine? and can there be a true and pure love that does not in some sort own allegiance to God?"

Mr. St. Aubyn's face was serious and thoughtful.

"Pure and true love is indeed Divine in its essence; but there is a carnal and earthly love too, which is but a travesty of God-given love, and burns to its own destruction. I think man often confuses these two loves, and sometimes calls the lower one the higher. Perhaps no eye but God's can really distinguish altogether the gold and the dross, but we can sometimes judge the tree by its fruit. How often do we see evil fruit springing from a tree which we have thought to be good! We are deceived sometimes, but our Heavenly Father never!"

"Yes! I think I know what you mean. I have seen something of that, as in poor Saul's case. The fruit is a sorrowful crop, and yet he means nobly and well, I am sure. But there is no love of God in his heart; and yet I sometimes wonder whether perhaps the love for man does not come first with some: 'If he loves not his brother whom he hath seen, how shall he love God whom he hath not seen?' There are words very like that somewhere."

"True, God's love is so beautiful and infinite, and His patience with His erring children so inexhaustible, that He will do everything in His power to lead their hearts to Him. We are taught and entreated throughout the Bible to seek *first* the kingdom of heaven; to give the whole of our

strength, and mind, and heart, and soul to God in loving submission; to be living members of His Body first, and then members one of another; but as though He would make provision for the weakness and frailty of the flesh, and the infirmity and lack of faith in human nature, we find here and there just such loving touches as show us that our Father will lead us to Himself by every possible means; that love for our brethren shall be a stepping-stone, if used aright, towards that higher and holier love; though perhaps the truer meaning of the words is to teach us that no love for God can be really pure and sincere if it does not carry with it love for our brethren too. The greater must embrace the less; and a man cannot truly love God who is in bitterness with the brethren."

They rode along in silence for a time then, each thinking deeply. Mr. St. Aubyn was the first to speak.

"Mr. Marchmont has left you then?"

"Yes, he started for London this morning."

"I knew it was to be soon. He came to say good-bye a few days ago. I was greatly pleased by the talk we had on that occasion."

Bride looked up quickly.

"I did not know Eustace had been to see you."

"Yes, he came and sat above two hours with me. We had a most interesting conversation. I almost wish you had been there to hear."

Bride was silent. She would not ask the nature of the conversation. She knew that Mr. St. Aubyn would tell her all that he felt at liberty to reveal.

Presently he spoke again, a slight smile playing on his lips.

"Long ago, as you know, we had a talk, part of which you overheard, in which Mr. Marchmont betrayed how deeply the philosophy of the destructive rationalists had eaten into his soul. I told him then that he would never be able to rest where he was; that even the philosophers

and students who had been so glad to destroy were already finding rest impossible, and were beginning a constructive form of rationalism, in which scope was allowed for an objective as well as a subjective Divinity, and a semblance of Christian faith creeping back, because men invariably find at last that they cannot do without it, although they too often content themselves with half-truths, or very small fragments of the whole truth. Well, he did not agree with me then; but it is wonderful what this year has done for his spiritual life. It is like talking to another man. It was wonderfully inspiring to mark the work of the Spirit in that heart. But I dare say you have found that out for yourself."

There were tears of joy in Bride's eyes. She did not turn her head as she answered—

"I have hoped so—I have thought so; but I have been afraid to ask or to hope too much."

"Ah! you need never fear that. Are we not bidden to 'hope and believe all things'? Is anything too hard for the Lord?"

"Indeed, I think not," answered Bride softly.

"It made me think of our talk once about forgiveness and the Father's love," continued Mr. St. Aubyn musingly. "It is such a beautiful mystery—that yearning love over all these myriads of disobedient children. And yet never an individual instance of spiritual grace comes before us, but we realise how true it is that the Father has gone forth to meet the erring son whilst he is still a great way off, and is leading him so tenderly home, sometimes almost before the wanderer has realised it himself."

Bride made no reply: her heart was too full; and so in happy communion of spirit the pair rode down the hill, and through the gate of the castle grounds.

"You will come and see my father when you have been to see Saul?" said Bride. "He would be sorry for you to go without paying him a visit."

Mr. St. Aubyn promised, and Bride rode on to the castle, and had changed her riding gear for a cool white dress before the clergyman appeared. His face was grave, and he looked troubled and compassionate.

"I have seen him," he said, in reply to Bride's look of inquiry, "I have seen him, and I found him stronger in body than I anticipated after all I have heard of the injuries he received. The doctor was leaving as I rode to the door, and said he was making a wonderful recovery. But I fear that the recovery is only one of the body. The soul and spirit are terribly darkened. It seems almost as though the powers of evil had so taken possession there that there was no room for the entry of God's light. I could not even speak the words I would have done. I saw that to do so would be only to provoke more blasphemies. May God in His mercy do something to soften that hard heart, for only He can do it!"

It was the same tale all the way through where poor Saul was concerned. Impenitent, rebellious, cursing his own fate and crippled condition, and cursing yet more bitterly those he held responsible for the accident—the tyrants who set soldiers upon poor and harmless people, to trample them to death beneath their iron heel for no other offence than claiming the rights of human beings and citizens of the commonwealth. He refused all visits save those from such men of his own fashion of thinking as came to condole with him, and to fan the flame of his bitterness and wrath. Abner soon ceased to try and reason with him. He wrestled ceaselessly in prayer for him, as indeed did many of his neighbours, who were wont to meet together at intervals for the reading the Scripture, and that prayer for the speedy coming of the Lord, which had become one of the leading features of the faith of the little community of St. Bride. It was indeed all that could be done for the unhappy young man; and so soon as he was able to get about on crutches, he announced

his intention of going back to Mother Clat's, and resuming his old life with the fishermen.

There was indeed one very good reason why he should do this. In a boat his lameness would matter comparatively little. He could manage sheet and tiller whilst he sat quietly in the stern; and although there would be moments when he would feel somewhat keenly the loss of his foot and his crippled condition, yet this would be not nearly the same hindrance to him on the water as it would be on land.

A collection had been made for him in the town by a number of those who regarded him as a victim and a martyr. This amounted to a sum sufficient to enable him to purchase a little cutter of his own, that happened to be going cheap at a neighbouring seaport town. Saul's mates having heard of it, went to look at it, and finally negotiated the purchase, which made him the proud possessor of this fast-sailing cutter, which was significantly said to be far faster and more responsive to wind and tide than any of the Customs boats in these parts.

And now a new life began for Saul. He had always done some smuggling along the coast with his friends the fishermen; but now it became a regular trade with him. Fishing was the merest excuse for the more serious occupation of his life; and as his health and strength returned with this free life on the sea, so did his ferocious hatred to all restraints of law and order grow and increase in him. He delighted in his illicit traffic far more because he was a breaker of the law than because it brought him large gains. He began to be a notable man along the coast; appearing now at this place, now at the other; landing his goods with a skill and daring that made him the idol of the fisher-folk all around, and the terror of the custom-house officers, who tried in vain to catch him, and began to think he must bear a charmed life, so absolutely impossible did they find it to get sight of him.

As for the gentry round, there was a very mixed feeling in their minds with regard to the defaulter and his occupation. They had nearly all of them cellars of excellent brandy and wine that had never paid duty, and were by no means desirous of seeing the illicit traffic too rigidly put down. They winked at it, if they did not actually encourage it; and it was well known that half of them would always buy smuggled goods and ask no question, in spite of all that the indignant officers could urge to the contrary.

The country was soon in a state of pleasurable excitement with the news that the Reform Bill had successfully passed the Commons, and had only to go through the Upper House to become law. The ignorant people considered the triumph already assured, and began to wonder why something wonderful did not immediately happen to change the current of their lives and issue in a new prosperity and affluence. But others shook their heads, and said the Lords would be certain to throw it out, whilst some argued that they would not dare, when the mind of the country had been so emphatically declared.

The Duke was very doubtful as to the result.

"The Duke of Wellington will fight it tooth and nail," he said to those who asked his opinion, "and I think he will carry the House with him. My kinsman, young Marchmont, tells me that if the Lords refuse to pass it, they will urge the King to make such a number of new Whig peers as shall suffice to carry it in the teeth of all opposition. His Majesty is very averse to such a step, though anxious for the passage of the bill. It remains to be seen what will happen. But I do not think the Iron Duke will give way."

All this talk sufficed to keep the country alive and excited through the early autumn months. Eustace wrote regularly, sometimes to the Duke, sometimes to

Bride; and she wrote to him according to promise, telling him the news of the place, her own particular history, and the doings of Saul. Eustace himself wrote to Saul from time to time, and received answers from the wild young man always breathing a spirit of personal loyalty and devotion; but nothing which passed induced him for one moment to give up his wild life. His boat was always speeding between the shores of England and France. He was seldom at home, and when in the cottage on the beach, seldom to be spoken with by any of those who would gladly have tried to approach him for his own good. Bride once or twice encountered him, and spoke gently to him; but though he stood before her silently and with an outward aspect of respect, he would scarcely give her back a word, and only appeared to listen to her with any willingness when she told him of Eustace.

He sometimes went into Pentreath, and addressed meetings there, in response to invitations from old associates; but his personal interest in the place and in politics seemed to have flagged just now. The passing of the measure upon which his heart had been set took away from him his sense of grievance, and robbed that side of his character of its main element. He shared the half-ignorant expectations of the lower classes, that as soon as the Reform Bill became law some great change in the condition of the people would result immediately from it; and he supposed this change was already going on in other places, and would soon reach the West Country. If that was so, his task was over for the present, until some new agitation was set on foot. Meantime the free and lawless life he was leading was all-sufficient for him. He was the hero of St. Bride's Bay, the most successful man all along the coast, and was not only making money fast, but was enjoying his life as he had perhaps never enjoyed it before.

But the old class hatred which had long burned within him was still smouldering as fiercely as before, and only wanted a breath of wind to fan it to a raging flame.

Nor was this breath long wanting; for in November came the news that the Lords had thrown out the bill, that for the moment it was dead, could not pass into law, that the battle would have to be fought all over again (as most people thought), and that the Lords had shown themselves once and for all the fierce and inveterate enemies of the rights and liberties of the people.

A great wave of anger and revolt swept all through England when this thing became known. Perhaps never had she been so near to revolution as that dark November, when the people, eagerly awaiting the advent of some wonderful and semi-miraculous change in their condition, received the news that the measure which was to ensure this had been trampled under foot, and cast ignominiously to the four winds of heaven by the peers of the realm. A cry of execration and hatred ran through the country. Riots and incendiary fires broke out wherever the news penetrated. At Pentreath there was a hot demonstration of popular fury; and Saul had never so raged against his physical infirmity as when he found himself forced to remain at home, eating his heart out in silence, whilst the other men of his persuasion marched with the rioters, and committed acts of lawlessness which gratified their bitter hatred, without, as it happened, doing very much permanent harm in the place.

But the passion that can vent itself is less dangerous than that which is locked up without an outlet, and seethes and smoulders till something suddenly causes a violent explosion. Could Saul have gone with his comrades, perhaps more immediate mischief might have been done, since his was always the most daring spirit; but possibly the blackest chapter of his life might not

have been written, and he might have been saved from the depth of iniquity into which he speedily fell.

There is an anger so terrible in its intensity that it works like madness in the brain; and this anger is generally the fiercest when it exists between class and class, and results in reality less from inherent ill-will between the two parties concerned, than from a constitutional and insurmountable difficulty in mutual understanding.

This hatred (which has been at the bottom of many of the world's tragedies) was now burning with such a white heat of silent fury in Saul's breast that there began to creep into his sombre eyes a light like that of madness. He would sit up late into the night brooding over the dying embers of the fire, and thinking thoughts that hardly bore putting into words. The wild weather had for the present put a stop to his cruises. He felt the change from the mild autumn days, and often had pain in the maimed member which had suffered from the surgeon's knife. He was not able to get out much in the cold and wet, and this constant brooding and fierce silent thought were almost enough to turn any man's brain.

"Revenge! revenge! revenge!" such was the burden of his thoughts; and as he sat pondering over his wild yearnings after vengeance, there would steal into his mind, like whispers from the evil one, memories of what desperate men in past days had done to bring about ruin and disaster. Great ships, containing the wealth of the proud and prosperous, had been shattered on these cruel rocks, and high-born men and women had found a grave in the dark cruel waters, a grave less cruel and dark than the one which engulfed hundreds and thousands of their helpless brothers and sisters through their own greed and selfishness. Would it not be a righteous retribution to lure some such vessel with its living freight

upon those cruel "Bull's Horns"? He knew his comrades would aid and abet such a notion, if he propounded it, for the sake of the plunder and the gain it would bring. But for him the plunder was nothing; he would not touch the gold. But he should feel he had struck a vengeful blow against the rich and the mighty of the land, and then perchance the fever-thirst of his soul would be quenched, and he could rest again.

And thus, brooding and planning and meditating, the dark days slipped by one by one, and the light of madness and unquenchable hatred burned ever brighter and brighter in Saul's eyes.





CHAPTER XIX

THE BULL'S HORNS

IT was so fatally easy.

St. Bride's Bay lay between two very dangerous points along the coast. Its south extremity was bounded by the long jagged reef known as the Smuggler's Reef, whilst its northern limit was formed by the jutting cliff upon which Penarvon Castle had been built, and by those two huge crescent-like projecting rocks, significantly termed the Bull's Horns, just below the castle walls, with the treacherous silting, shifting bed of quicksand between.

For many years now in one turret of the castle there had burned from dusk till dawn a strong, steady light, warning vessels along the coast of this dangerous spot. The lantern-tower, as it was commonly called, had a separate entrance and staircase of its own, and the light was watched and tended by a disabled fisherman, who had been appointed by the late Duchess to the office when unfit for more active work. Although growing old and feeble now, he still clung to his task, and had never been found unfaithful to his post, or unable to fulfil the light duties it imposed upon him.

The light in this lantern-tower warned vessels of their exact position, and was a most valuable beacon to them; for as soon as ever they had passed it, it became

necessary (if they were passing down Channel) to set the ship's head almost due east, so as to avoid a dangerous cross current round some sunken rocks out at sea, and to keep for some short distance very near in-shore, the water being at this point very deep, and free from any rock or reef.

The plan fermenting in the darkened mind of Saul Tresithny became thus fatally easy. A small body of determined men had only to go to the lantern tower after the household at the castle had retired to rest, overpower the old custodian, extinguish the light, and light a false beacon farther along the coast—a little to the south of the Smuggler's Reef—and the thing was done. Any vessel beating down Channel would see the light, would clear it, and then turn sharp towards the land, and upon a dark and moonless night would strike hopelessly, and without a moment's warning, upon those cruel Bull's Horns, from whose deadly embrace there would be no escape. The vessel would shatter, the crew and passengers would be sucked into a living tomb. The men bent on plunder would have time to secure for themselves a certain amount of the cargo, but before morning dawned the vessel would in all probability have disappeared utterly and entirely. Saul's act of purposeless vengeance would be accomplished, and he told himself that he should then have some peace.

Of the hapless crew—men drawn from his own class—he would not allow himself to think. They always went, more or less, with their lives in their hands, and sooner or later a large proportion met a watery death. They must take their chance. It was not with them he was concerned. What he longed to do was to strike a blow at wealth, prosperity, and rank. He was unable to take any part in the turbulent scenes enacting in the country round; but if he could lure to its fate some great vessel with its freight of passengers—one of those

new vessels which worked by steam-power, that were just beginning to make headway and to appear along the coasts, to the astonishment and superstitious terror of the fishermen—if he could lure one of these vessels, which always carried wealthy passengers, who could afford to pay for the extra advantages of speed and independence of contrary wind, he felt he should be striking a blow at the hated world of wealth and opulence; and little recked he of any personal peril he might run were the thing found out.

As to his own fate, he was perfectly indifferent. A fierce despair mingled with his reckless hatred of his kind. He would willingly lay down his own life if he could by those means compass the ruin of his enemies. He would sometimes sit and ponder, with a fierce brooding envy, over the story of the death of Samson, with which Abner's reading of the Scriptures to him in his childhood had made him familiar. If only he could achieve an act of vengeance like that! What a glorious death it would be! But there was no such way open to him of avenging his nameless wrongs against the world. He could only accomplish an isolated act of malevolent cruelty and destruction. But he brooded over that, and thought out its details, till he seemed in his feverish dreams to see the thing enacted over and over, till every detail was familiar. He used to dream that the vessel had struck, that she was going to pieces fast, that he and his comrades were out in their boats, listening to the cries and shrieks of the drowning wretches, always avoiding giving the help so agonisingly demanded, pushing savagely from the gunnel of their boat any frantic hand that might cling to it, and laughing with fiendish joy as the wretched victims sank with a gurgling cry, or were washed within the region of the treacherous quicksand.

Such dreams might well work a sort of madness in a brain inflamed with hatred, and a mind all but unhinged

by illness, and perpetual revolt against the conditions of life. Saul had every detail planned by this time with almost diabolical precision. All that was wanted now was the right moment and the right vessel. He had his scouts out along the coast. He knew they would receive warning of the approach of such a vessel as would afford a rich prey for plunderers and a rich vengeance for him.

"Papa," said Bride one morning, seeking her father with an open letter in her hand, and a soft flush upon her cheek, "I have a letter here from Eustace. He thinks of coming to the castle to tell us all about the bill, and what has been happening in London, and what is likely to happen."

The Duke looked up with something approaching eagerness in his face. He had missed his young kinsman during these past months, and was beginning to feel it pleasant to have Eustace about the place, even though they were by no means of entire accord in their views or in their outlook on life. Although he seldom spoke on the subject, the old peer had begun to feel his hold upon life rather uncertain. He had never recovered the shock of his wife's death, and he experienced from time to time an uneasy sensation in the region of the heart, which made him suspect that that organ was in some sort affected. His father had died suddenly of syncope at seventy years of age, and the Duke remembered hearing him describe sensations exceedingly like those from which he began at times to suffer himself.

He could not therefore but feel a wish to see something settled as to Bride's future. She was very much alone in the world, and would be in sore need of a protector were her father taken away. He had long felt that a husband's loving and protecting care was what she truly needed, and rather blamed himself for having kept her so entirely from meeting with men of her own age and station. But if his

own heir, this young enthusiast Eustace, of whom he was really beginning to think well and to regard with affection, had really succeeded in making an impression upon the girl's sensitive heart, nothing could be more entirely satisfactory from a worldly standpoint. No one knew better than the Duke how well fitted his daughter was to be the future Duchess of Penarvon, and how greatly she would be beloved by all, as indeed she was already. He had entertained this hope when first Eustace came amongst them, and had then allowed it to fall into abeyance, fearing how the young man's character would turn out, and that he and Bride would never agree. But hope had revived upon the second visit, when Eustace had shown a different calibre of mind and a greater moderation and thoughtfulness. The hearts of both father and daughter had changed towards him, and again a hope had awakened within the Duke's heart that he should still live to see his daughter the wife of the man who must succeed him at Penarvon.

Thus this announcement of Bride's came upon him with a note of gladness, and he looked at her with unwonted animation.

"A visit from Eustace? That is good hearing. I had written to ask if he could not spend his Christmas with us. Is this his answer?"

"I think he can hardly have got your letter. It does not sound like an answer. But he speaks of a wish to see Penarvon again, and to consult with you about the political outlook. He knows he will be welcome, from other things you have said. He will get your invitation, I dare say, before he starts. I hope he will be with us then. It is hard to be happy at Christmas—hard not to feel it a sorrowful instead of a joyful day; but it will help us to have Eustace. I am glad he will be with us."

"Does he say when he will come?"

"Not exactly; he does not know when he can get away.

He seems very busy; but he says he thinks he shall come by water. The roads are so very heavy after the long autumn rains."

"It may be easier and more comfortable," said the Duke, "but I have always preferred land travelling myself. Contrary winds make water journeys too tedious at times, and I am not a lover of the sea."

"I think Eustace is. And he says he will not come if he has to take a sailing-vessel; but he thinks he can travel by one of those wonderful new boats which go by steam-power. He has been in one before. He went to Scotland so once, he told me. Last time he was here he was very full of it. He thinks there will soon be nothing else used for long voyages. It is wonderful to think how they can move through the water without sails or oars. He says in his letter he thinks he may soon have a chance of coming along the coast in one of these strange and wonderful vessels, and will be put ashore either at Plymouth or Falmouth, and come on to us from there."

"That would not be a bad plan. I myself have sometimes wished to travel by these new boats; but I hardly think I shall do so in my time. In yours they may become more common. Eustace was telling me of them himself. If I knew where he would land, I would travel down to meet him and see the ship myself."

"Ah! I wish we did know," answered Bride, with brightening eyes; "I would go with you, papa, and see the wonderful new ship too."

The Duke was studying her face attentively.

"You are pleased to think of having your cousin here again, Bride?" he asked tentatively.

Her face was very sweet in its soft increase of colour, but her eyes were steady, and truthfully fearless.

"I think I am very glad," she said softly. There was a pause after this which neither seemed exactly to know how to break; but at last Bride said in a different tone,

"And I am glad for another reason too. Eustace is the only person who has any influence over poor Saul Tre-sithny. It seems as though he were the only person in the world that Saul has ever loved. He does love him. His name is just the one thing that will rouse him to listen to Abner, or which wins him a look from me if I try to speak to him. Whatever harm Eustace may have done Saul in the beginning—and I fear he did help to rouse in him those fierce and evil passions which have worked such havoc of his life—at least he has won the only love of a heart that seems closed to all the world besides; and Abner thinks as I do, and Mr. St. Aubyn also, that no soul is quite dead, no spirit altogether beyond hope of reclaim in which the spirit of love yet burns, however feebly and fitfully. Eustace always believes that it was to save him from being trampled down by the sudden turning and plunging of the horses that day in the crowd, which made Saul spring at them, and almost cost him his life. If so, there must be a vein of gold in his nature somewhere; and I always think that Eustace will find it some day, somehow. Poor Saul! He looks most terribly haggard and wild and miserable. Everybody else has failed to touch him; but I do think Eustace may succeed when he comes. He had to leave last time, before Saul had recovered consciousness enough to bear the excitement of a visit."

"I trust it may be so, for the sake of the unhappy young man himself, and of his patient and heroic old grandfather. Abner's faith is a lesson to us all. May God send him at last his heart's desire!"

It was so seldom that her father spoke thus, that sudden tears sprang to the girl's eyes; and instead of answering, she laid her hand softly on his shoulder, the mute caress speaking more eloquently than words. For a moment there was silence between them, and then the Duke asked—

"Shall you let Saul know that Eustace is coming?"

"I shall tell Abner. I never see Saul now. He can do as he thinks best; but I believe he will decide to say nothing, but let Eustace come upon him quite unexpectedly, before Saul knows anything about his being here, or has had time to harden his heart, as he might try to do, even against Eustace, if he were prepared beforehand. I think with such natures as his it is better to give no time for that. But Abner will know best."

"Now's our chance. Her be beatin' down Channel. The lads 'a sighted she round t' corner. Her'll be passin, in an hour. 'Tis zo dark's a hadge out o' doors, and 'twill be cruel cold bimbye. The bwoys are all out ready with the false light. We'm goin' to put out t'other light, then we'll be all ready."

The light leaped into Saul's sombre eyes as this news was brought by a pair of breathless and excited fishermen, after more than ten days of anxious watching. So soon as the last moon had begun to wane, a close watch was established all along the coast, and had been continued on every dark night since; and as all the nights had been wild and dark, the watch had never been relaxed. The watchers kept their look-out from a little cove not more than four miles off as the crow flies, but situated just where the coast made a great bend, so that the coasting vessels had to make a great *détour*, and took a considerable time getting round the point, especially with a raging north-westerly gale driving up Channel as on to-night.

"Be she a zailin' ship?" asked Saul.

"Naw, her be one o' they new-fangled ones wi' smoke querkin' out of her middle. Yu'll be gwoin' to the bwoat, Zaul, nappen, and get she out. Us'll be a'ter yu quick's us can. 'Twidden tak' us long to put out ol' Joey's light."

"I'll go tu the boat," answered Saul, seizing his crutch

"She's all ready at her moorin's. Yu'll find me there when yu've changed the lights. I'll watch for yu tu come. I s'pose it's pretty quiet in the bay?"

"Ess zure. Win's tu northerly tu hurt she. Us wunt keep yu long waitin'. Coome on, lad. Us is bound vur tu be sharp."

The men hurried off through the driving rain and bitter wind of midnight upon their diabolic errand; and Saul, with a look upon his face which spoke of a purpose equally diabolic, limped down to the shore, seeming to see in the dark like a cat, and took up his place in his own stout and seaworthy little boat.

It was what sailors call a "dirty night," a stiff half-gale blowing, and scuds of rain driving over, making the darkness more pitchy whilst they lasted. There was no moon, and the sky was obscured by a thick pall of low-lying cloud. It was the kind of night just suited to a deed of darkness and wickedness, such as the one about to be perpetrated.

Saul, with a face that matched in gloom and wildness the night itself, sat in his boat with his eyes fixed steadfastly upon the gleaming light in the lantern-tower of the castle, that strong and steady light which shone out over the waste of waters like a blessing as well as a beacon. All at once, even whilst he watched, the light suddenly flickered and went out, whilst at the very same instant up sprang another light, equally steady and strong, on the other side of the bay, which, after flickering for a few moments, settled down as it were, and burned on with a fixed and calm radiance.

Saul's face, turned towards it, seemed to catch a momentary gleam. His dark eyes glowed and flashed in their hollow caverns. His hands clenched themselves convulsively upon the tiller by which he sat. There was in his fierce heart a throb of triumphant satisfaction which made life almost a joy to him at that moment. He felt a

spring of life well up within him, such as he had not experienced for months. After all, so long as vengeance remained to him, life was not altogether devoid of joy.

The sound of voices approaching from the shore warned him that his confederates were approaching. Some came from the castle, others from the neighbourhood of the false light they had kindled. In all there were a dozen of them, stout fierce men, bent on plunder, and caring nothing for the loss of human life, like too many of their race all along the coast in those days.

Some of these men pushed off in a second boat, others joined Saul in his small cutter. They carried no lights with them, nor did they do more than row out into the bay. Once safely off from shore, they lay still on their oars, and listened and watched intently, talking in low tones to one another from time to time, but mostly absorbed in the excitement of expectation.

All at once out of the darkness hove a light, out beyond the Smuggler's Reef, where the false light was burning, and a stifled exclamation of triumph burst from all—

“That be she!”

Then deep silence fell again, and the men held their breath to watch her course. She went slowly by the reef; they could hear the throb of her engines in pauses of the gale; and then suddenly they saw her lights shift—she had fallen into the trap—she was turning inwards. In a few short minutes more she would strike upon those cruel horns, and be dashed to pieces before them, without the chance of escape. If they struck outside the rock, there would be more spoil and prey; but it might be safer for the wreckers if she went within the extended horns and grounded there. Then the quicksands would suck down all traces in a very short time, and none would know the fate of the missing vessel, which would be supposed to have met her death through the failure of the new-fangled machinery.

Onward, ever onward, came the doomed ship, riding fearlessly through the angry sea, secure of the course she was going. She had slowed down a little in turning, but the engines were at work now at full power. Her light was very near. The men in the boats almost felt as though their close promixity would be observed. . . .

CRASH!

It was an awful sound. No man of those who heard it that night ever forgot it, and it rang in Saul's ears for many a long weary day, driving him well-nigh to madness.

One terrific splintering crash, and then an awful sound of grinding and tearing and battering. The ship's lights heaved up and fell again in a terrible fashion, and amid the shrill whistling of the gale there rang out a wail of human anguish and despair, and then hoarse loud voices, as if in command; though there was no distinguishing words in the strife of the elements.

Motionless, awed, triumphant, yet withal almost terrified, the wreckers sat in their boats and listened and waited. It needed no great exercise of knowledge to tell them that the great vessel had heeled over and was settling—settling slowly to her end; that there could be no launching of boats—no hope for any on board unless they were stout and sturdy swimmers and well acquainted with the coast. The vessel had actually impaled itself, as it were, upon the cruel sharp point of one of the horns. The water had rushed in through the ruptured side, and almost at once the great floating monster had heeled over, and, though partially upheld by the rocks, was being battered and dashed in the most fearful way, so that no living being could long escape either being drawn down to a watery death, or battered out of all human form upon the cruel jagged rocks.

At first a shriek and a cry of human anguish would

rend the silence for a moment, and then sink again. But now many moments had passed and no such sound had been heard. Moments grew into minutes, and perhaps a quarter of an hour passed thus in watching the one light rising and falling as the vessel rose on the crests of the waves only to be dashed down again with renewed fury, whilst the rending of timbers and snapping of spars told a tale that was intelligible enough to the fierce men only a stone's throw from the doomed vessel.

At last they deemed they had waited long enough. From the very nature of the catastrophe, it was unlikely there would be many survivors. All who were below must have perished like rats in a trap, and the few on deck would quickly have been swept overboard. It was time the plundering began, else there might be little left to plunder. As it was, there would be peril in trying to rifle the hull; but these men knew what they were about, and producing their dark lanterns, they cautiously approached the floating mass, and after due precautions, scrambled one after another upon her, and commenced a rapid but cautious search.

With this sort of thing Saul had no concern. He knew that his comrades must be gratified in their thirst for plunder, but his work had been accomplished when the great vessel struck without hope of succour. As the larger boat could not approach too nearly to the wreck, all the men had gone off in the smaller one, and were to bring to him from time to time such valuables as they could find and secure. Twice already had this been done, and the men reported that there was more still to come, and that they might make a second journey to the wreck perhaps, if she would only hold together whilst both the laden boats put ashore and came out again empty. His comrades were daring and skilful, and ran less risk than they appeared to do in thus treading the

decks of the vessel. She had lodged now, and though still swept by heavy seas, was not tossed about as she had been at first. The tide was falling and had landed her fast upon a serrated ledge of rock. Unless she broke up, she would lie there till the next tide dashed her off again and sucked her into the quicksand. But as the water fell, more and more booty became accessible. The greed in the men's hearts rose with what they found. They told themselves that this night's work would make them rich for life.

But Saul would not leave the spot. A curious fascination held him rooted to it. When the boats were filled and the men insisted on going, he said he would get upon the wreck and await their return there. The wind was abating. The sea was running less high. It was clear to experienced eyes that for some hours at least the vessel would lie where she was, and that there would be no great peril in remaining on her. Saul was not a man easy to thwart or contradict. His comrades raised no objection to what he proposed. It was his affair, not theirs, and they helped him to a station on the deck and left him. They left a light with him—it would serve them as a beacon in returning.

Saul sat where he had been placed and watched them row away, their light growing fainter and fainter over the great crested waves. He sat alone upon the shivering, heaving wreck, pondering on the night's work, and on all he had seen and done. He pictured the scene that these decks must have witnessed but one short hour ago, and thought of all the dead men—and fair women, perhaps—lying drowned and dead in the cabins beneath his feet. A savage light came into his eyes. A wild triumphant laugh rang out in the silence and the darkness. He thought for a moment of trying to get below and looking upon the dead faces of his foes—men and women he had hated for no other cause than that they lived in a world that

was for him a place of evil and oppression, and deserved to die for the tyranny and oppression of the race they represented to his disordered imagination.

But he did not go. For one thing, his lameness hindered him; for another, there was something almost too ghastly even for him in the thought. But as he sat brooding and thinking of it all out in the cold and the darkness of the night, well might he have been taken for the very spirit of the storm, sitting wild-eyed and sullenly triumphant in the midst of all this destruction, gloating over the death of his fellow-men, and picturing the ghastly details with the fascination of a mind on the verge of madness.

Suddenly an object floating in the water, quite near to the vessel, took his eyes, and roused him from his lethargy. In another moment his experienced and cat-like eyes had grasped its outline, and he knew what it was.

A human creature—a man, in all probability—supported in the water by a life-belt, for he could see the outlines of head and shoulders above the crests of the waves. Well could Saul guess what had happened. This man—sailor or passenger, whichever he might be—had been on deck when the ship struck. He had had the good fortune and presence of mind to secure a life-belt about him during the few minutes that the ship kept above water, and probably struck out for shore when washed from the deck. In all probability he had quickly been dashed against the rocks and deprived of consciousness, and the ebb of the tide had dragged and sucked him back from the shore and in the direction of the wreck. A little more and he would be washed upon the shoals of treacherous quicksand—and then!

A sudden fierce desire came upon Saul to see the face of this man. He was floating almost close to the wreck now, rising and falling upon the heaving waves without any motion save what they endowed him with. Saul

turned and possessed himself of his lantern, and moving cautiously to the very edge of the wreck, turned the light full upon the floating object in the water.

Then the silence of the night was rent by a wild and exceeding bitter cry; and in the midst of the darkness and terror of that winter's night, the soul of Saul Tresithny suddenly awoke, amid throbs of untold anguish, from its long lethargy and death. In one moment of intense illumination, in which for a moment he seemed wrapped in flame—scorched by a remorse and despair that was in essence different from anything he had experienced hitherto, he saw his past life and the crime of the night in a totally new aspect. It was a moment not to be analysed, not to be described; but the impression was such that its memory was graven on his mind ever after in characters of fire. It was as if in that awful moment something within him had died and something been born. Heart and soul, for those few brief seconds in which he stood mute and paralysed with horror, were crowded with all the bitterness of death and the pangs of birth. Yet it was scarce five seconds that the spell held him in its thrall.

What was it that he saw in that heaving waste of waters?

The face of the one man that he loved. The face of the only human creature whom he had thought on as a friend. The face of Eustace Marchmont!

And he—Saul Tresithny—had lured his only friend, and the one being he loved and trusted—to a terrible and hideous death.

It was as he realised this that the awful cry broke from him, and after that the five seconds of paralysed waiting and watching that seemed like an eternity to him.

Then in the midst of that unspeakable agony there came one whisper as of hope—the voice of an angel—penetrating the terrible despairing anguish of his soul.

"Perhaps he is not yet dead. Perchance it may be given you to save him yet. But lose not a moment, else your chance may come too late."

When Saul heard that voice, he hesitated not one second. Flinging off his heavy pilot-coat, and casting a rope round him, which he fastened to a broken mast, he plunged without a moment's hesitation into the sea, striking out for the floating object now just being carried beyond the circle of light cast by the lamp.

Saul had always been a strong and bold swimmer, but since he became maimed and lame and enfeebled, he had seldom been in the water save for the purpose of launching his boat or getting it in, and he had done no swimming for many months. Still there was no difficulty in reaching Eustace and getting a firm grip round his neck. The life-buoy supported the double weight well; but when Saul strove to strike out in the direction of the ship, he found that the ebb of the tide was carrying them both farther and farther away. Struggle as he would, he could get no nearer, but saw the light as it were receding from him, and knew that the ebb was sucking them little by little towards those terrible quicksands close at hand, which if they touched, their doom was sealed.

When would the rope be payed out and stop them? He had not guessed how long it was when he had tied one end about his waist and fastened the other about the broken mast. Would it never become taut, that he could try hauling himself and his comrade in? And even where they now were they might touch the sand any moment with the fall of the tide. It was constantly changing and shifting. No one knew exactly where it would lie from day to day and week to week.

A sense of cold numb horror fell upon Saul. He was growing faint and giddy. A whisper in another voice now assailed his ears.

"Save yourself at least—and leave him to perish.

Likely enough he is dead already ; why risk your life for a corpse ? Without his weight you could easily make the ship. Save yourself, and leave him to his fate. What is he to you ? ”

Saul's senses were leaving him fast, ebbing away in a deadly faintness that made even the terror of his position more like a dream than a reality. But even so the words of the tempter fell powerless upon his ears. His answer was to set his teeth and close his embrace more fast around his friend.

“ If he dies, I will die with him ! ” was the unspoken thought of his heart.

A sudden jerk told him that the rope was all payed out. Had he strength to pull it in again ? Rallying his failing powers with an almost superhuman effort, and still keeping his arms clasped about Eustace, he got hold of the rope behind his back, and bit by bit he pulled upon it, drawing the double burden slowly—oh ! how slowly and painfully !—inch by inch towards the wreck.

The whole of his past life seemed to rise up in review before him without any volition on his own part—his happy childhood with his grandfather in the gardener's cottage—Abner's words of loving admonition and instruction—the teaching he had imbibed almost without knowing it, and had deliberately thrust from him later on. Then he seemed to see himself at the farm, working early and late with Farmer Teazel's men ; his brief but ardent courting of Genefer seemed like nothing but a dream ; whilst the sudden appearance of Eustace Marchmont into his life was stamped upon his soul as in characters of fire. This man had called him friend—had taught him, cared for him, put himself on an equality with him—had taken his hand as brother might the hand of brother. And he—Saul—had brought him to *this*—had perhaps done him to death ! It must not—it should not be !

A noise of rushing was in his ears His breath came

in laboured gasps. His heart seemed bursting; his eyes were blinded, and could see nothing but a floating, blood-red haze. In laboured gasps of agony the words came from him—words of the first prayer which had ever passed his lips since the days of his childhood—

“Lord, have mercy upon us! God, give me strength to save him!”

And even with those words on his lips his consciousness failed him; black darkness swallowed him up.





CHAPTER XX

BRIDE'S VIGIL

BRIDE was awakened from sleep by the sound of a voice.
“Bride! Bride! Oh, my love, farewell! God grant we meet again in the eternal haven of rest! Farewell, my love, farewell!”

The voice sounded so loud in her ears that the girl started wide awake in bed, and found herself sitting up, gazing across the dimly-lighted room, in the expectation of seeing some one beside her.

But there was nothing. The room was empty, save for her own presence. The fire was not yet out, and the night-lamp on the table in the corner burned with a steady ray. Outside, the voice of the storm wailed round the corners of the house; but Bride was too well used to the voice of wind and water to think she had been deceived by that. There was nothing in the voice of the gale to-night different from what she was used to hear wherever the winter days had come. Often and often the tempest raged with double and treble power about the exposed castle, and yet she was not disturbed. What, then, had happened to-night?

She passed her hands across her eyes, as if to clear away the mists of sleep.

“It was Eustace’s voice!” she said in her heart, and a light shiver ran through her.

Perhaps she had been thinking of Eustace at sea before she slept, for her dreams had been of a ship ploughing through the waves. She could not recall all that she had dreamed; but she was vaguely conscious that her visions had been uneasy ones of terror and peril. She could not be sure whether she had dreamed of Eustace: everything was confused in her mind. But that voice calling her name through the darkness had been utterly different from anything that had gone before, and had effectually aroused her from sleep.

"Is he in peril? Is he thinking of me?" she asked herself; and even as she put the question she rose from her bed and began mechanically to dress herself; for there was only one thing now possible for Bride, and that was to pour out her soul in prayer for the man she loved—the man she believed to be in danger at this very moment. Why that conviction of his peril came so strongly upon her she could hardly have explained. She had had no vivid dream; she had gone to rest with no presentiment of evil. That dream-cry was the only cause of her uneasiness; but the conviction was so strong that there could be no more sleep for her that night. She was absolutely certain of that, and she quickly dressed herself, as though to be ready for a call when it came; and when she had stirred the fire into a glow, and had trimmed and lighted her larger lamp, she knelt down beside the little table whereon lay her books of devotion, and the Bible which had been her mother's, and laid bare her soul in supplication and prayer for the man she now knew that she loved, and whom she fully believed to be in peril to-night, though whether this peril were physical or spiritual she could not tell.

And yet it mattered not, for God knew, and He would hear her supplication, and answer it in His own way. Bride did not know whether Eustace had yet learned to pray for himself; but she had been praying so long

that there was nothing strange in this long and impassioned prayer for him to-night. How the time passed the girl did not know; nor did she know what it was that prompted her at last to go to the window and draw aside the curtain to look out into the night.

When she did this, however, she became aware that the darkness without was something unwonted, and for a moment she could not understand the cause of this. There was no moon, and the sky was obscured by a wrack of drifting cloud; why should there be anything but black darkness? and yet it was not always so, even on the pitchiest nights. And then a sudden cry broke from her pale lips—

“The lantern-tower is not lighted to-night!”

That was it. That was what she missed—the faint refulgence she was accustomed to see shining from the turret where the great lamp always burned. What had happened? Had the old fisherman neglected to come? or had he been negligent of his charge and suffered the lamp to go out? She felt sure the light must have been burning as usual earlier in the night. It was lighted at five now, and numbers of persons would have noticed had it not been lighted, and news would certainly have quickly reached the castle. No, it must be that the old fisherman had gone to sleep, and had omitted to fill up the lamp, which had burned down and gone out. And ah! suppose some vessel even now was beating down Channel, and anxiously looking out for the beacon! Oh, suppose some vessel was already in peril for want of the guiding light! Suppose that vessel were the one in which Eustace was journeying to them! Ah!—was that the meaning of that cry? Had it indeed been sent as a sign—as a warning?

With a sense of sudden comprehension Bride turned back into the room and hastily took up her lamp. Without waiting to summon any other person—without

a moment of needless delay—she made her way along the dark still corridors, where the heavy shadows lay sleeping, but woke and fled away like spectres at her approach; through the blank silence of the great house she stepped, followed silently by the faithful hound, who always slept at her door, till she reached a heavy oaken door, studded with brass nails, and fastened on the inside with heavy bolts and clamps, that led from the castle into that corner turret which had for so many years been given up to the beacon light and its custodian.

Bride used as a child to go frequently into the tower with her mother. Latterly she had been much less often, but she was familiar with the fastenings of the door, and knew her way to the upper chamber where the great lamp burned.

The place was perfectly dark as she entered, and as silent as the grave; but as she ascended the spiral staircase which led to the chamber where the great lamp burned, she was aware of a peculiar moaning sound, she hardly knew whether human or not, and a thrill of horror ran through her, though she did not pause in her rapid ascent.

The hound heard it too, and sped past her with a low whimper of curiosity, bounding upwards and into the room overhead, where he broke into a loud bay.

Bride was keenly excited, too much excited to feel any personal fear; moreover, she knew that if the dog had found any unknown occupant in that upper chamber, he would have flown at him at once and pinned him, and she should be warned by the sounds as to what was going on. Hastily mounting the last flight, she entered the room, which, as she fully expected, was in utter darkness. The sound of inarticulate moaning grew louder as she approached, and the moment her lamp threw its beams within the chamber, she saw the old custodian lying on the floor, gagged, and bound with cruel cords, his

head bleeding a little from some cuts upon it, and his face drawn and white.

In a moment she had sprung to his aid. The hound was sniffing round the room with lashing tail and a red light in his eyes, uttering from time to time a deep bay, as though asking to be let out to follow on the track of the evil-doers who had forced a way into the tower to do this deed of darkness.

But Bride could not attend to him then. She got a strong knife out of the old fisherman's pocket, and in another minute he was free. He rose, looking dazed and shaken; but his first thought was for the extinguished light.

"They put her out zo zoon's they'd gotten me down," he explained in trembling tones, as he set about to kindle the beacon, not able even to drink the contents of the cup Bride had mixed for him (there was always refreshment kept in the room for the watcher on these cold nights) till he had set the lamp burning again. "They bwoys ban't a'ter no gude. Lord help any ship that's passed to-night. A take it they will 'ave abin an' gone vur tu light a valse light zumwheeres 'long t' coast. Yu can't remember they days, my laady, when 't wuz common 'nuff for the bwoys tu du that. But his Grace and your mawther, they zet theerselves agin it: and a'ter vour or vive o' the worst o' the lot 'ad abin clapped intu clink, and t' light zet burnin' heer, theer wuzzn't near zo much, and a thought it wuz pretty night stopped vur good. A reckon Zaul Tresithny's abin at the bottom o' this night's work, that a du. A zeed he t'other daay. 'E wuz just zo zavage's a bear, he wuz. With the faace aw'm like a death's 'ead 'pon a mop-stick. A zed then theer'd be mischief wi' 'e, afore we heerd t' last o't."

"Oh, I trust not!" breathed Bride, with clasped hands, as she stood watching the old man kindling the lamp, slowly drawling out his words as he did so. "It would

be too terrible. Saul of all people! Oh, I trust it is not so! It is awful for any of them to do such things; but some are too ignorant to understand the full meaning of such a fiendish act. But Saul is not ignorant; he would know. I pray he has had no hand in this thing!"

"A dawn't knaw, but a zuzpees 'e's abin at the bottom o't," was the deliberate reply. "Ef yu wuz tu luke out o' yon winder, my laady, mappen yu may zee a false light a burning zomewheeres 'long the shore. They'll a've tu putten out now we got this 'un alight: but I reckon they will 'ave abin burnin' one all this time. God help any poor ships as may 'ave bin goin' by tu-night!"

Bride, shivering with a nameless horror, went to the window indicated, and there, sure enough, about a mile away, she saw the twinkling of a false light, the dread purpose of which she but too well divined. Heaven send that no vessel had been lured by its false shining to a terrible fate!

"David," she said to the old man, "I must go and rouse the men, and send down to the shore to see what has been passing there. It is too fearful. Are you afraid to be left? Do you think there is any chance of those wicked men coming back? I will send somebody to you very quickly, and the dog shall stay to protect you meantime: he will not let anybody touch you or the light so long as he is here."

"Lorblessee! Dawntee by afeared to leev me. A dawn't think as they'll dare come agin. They'd be vules ef they were tu. A'll be zafe's a want in 'is burrow. Duee go and tell his Grace what they bwoys 'ave abin at. A reckon they'd not 'a dued it unless they'd 'a knawed as zome ship were like tu pass by. They bwoys mostly knaws what tu be at. Yu let me be, and go tu his Grace. Mappen theer's help wanted tu the shore by now."

Bride hastened away with a beating heart, leaving the

angry hound, who had never ceased sniffing round the doorway which led downwards to the outer door of the tower, to act as protector to the old man, in case the miscreants should again invade him with intent to put out the light. She rapidly retraced her steps to the inhabited part of the castle, and knocking at her father's door, told him enough to cause him to ring the bell in his room which communicated with the men's quarters, and quickly brought quite a number of them hurrying up to the master's room, ready dressed against some emergency.

The Duke had hastily attired himself, and was in earnest confabulation with his daughter by the time the household assembled. A few words to them sent them flying after lanterns and ropes, and Bride asked her father—

“What are you going to do?”

“I am going down to the shore, with all the men I can muster, to try and seize the wreckers if possible at their fiendish work, or to render help if it be possible to any hapless vessel they may have lured to destruction. I pray Heaven we may defeat their villainous intentions; but I fear old David is right, and that they know very well what they are about, and do not light false fires without warrant that they light them not in vain. Bride, remain you here; call up the women, and let one or two rooms be prepared. It may be we shall have some half-drowned guest with us when we return. It can do no harm to be prepared. That is your office. See that all is in readiness if wanted.”

The excitement and alarm had by this time spread to the stables, and the men from there came hurrying round, eager to take a share in the night's expedition. Two stout young fellows were sent to the foot of the lantern-tower to keep guard there, and see that no hurt came to the old man; and the rest were formed into a

regular marching squad by the Duke, who always had his servants drilled into some sort of military precision, ready for an emergency of this kind, and led by him straight down to the beach, carrying such things as were thought needful, both in the event of a struggle with the wreckers, or the necessity of organising a rescue party to some vessel in distress.

Bride was left in the castle, surrounded by the women of the household, who had by this time been aroused, and had come out of their rooms, some in terror, some in excitement, and were all eager to know both what had happened and what was to be done.

Bride took a little on one side the housekeeper and her old nurse, two old servants in whom she had the utmost confidence, and quietly gave her orders. One or two of the spare bed-chambers were to be quickly prepared for the accommodation of possible guests. The fire in the hall was to be lighted, and some refreshment spread there. Visitors at the castle had been rare of late, and some of the chambers were likely to be damp, and the fires might very likely smoke on being lighted.

"You had better make use of the rooms Mr. Marchmont uses when he is here," said Bride. "They have been used a good deal this year. I think there has never been any trouble with them."

"They are all ready, my lady," answered the housekeeper. "His Grace gave orders that they were to be put in readiness to receive him at any time. They only want the fires lighting."

"Ah! true—I remember," answered Bride. "Then let fires be lighted there instantly. Set the girls to work at something. They are only growing frightened and upset by talking and wondering. Let everything be ready in case there are persons brought in drowned, or almost drowned. Let everything be at hand that can

be wanted. Nurse, you understand that sort of thing. You know what is needed in every kind of emergency. See that all is ready. We do not know what may be coming to-night."

Bride spoke calmly, but her heart was throbbing wildly the whole time. In her head was beating the ceaseless repetition of the one name—"Eustace! Eustace! Eustace!"

She seemed all at once to understand the meaning of her troubled dream, and the cry which had awakened her. Eustace was truly in some deadly peril, and her name had been upon his lips, as it was in his heart, at the supreme moment when he believed himself passing from life to death. Bride had too full a belief in the independent life of the spirit to feel any great surprise at such a thing as this. The power and the deep mystery of love were a part of her creed. She held that a true and God-given love was as immortal as the soul—was the very essence of the soul; and now that she fully recognised the depth of her own love for Eustace, she could well believe (knowing his love for her) that his spirit would seek to meet hers in the supreme moment when he thought death was coming upon him. But, surely—ah! surely, her prayer for him, which had immediately followed upon that cry, would have been heard in heaven, and God would give him back to her! Ah! how she had prayed for this man—body, soul, and spirit! How she had poured out herself in supplication for him again and yet again, that his heart might be changed and softened, that the Spirit of grace might work therein, that he might learn to know his Saviour, and that his body might be preserved from all perils.

Bride had that faith which believes all things; and even through the anxious terrors of that night she believed that Eustace would be given back to her. She believed absolutely that he had been in deadly peril, that the cry she had heard in her dreams was no dream,

but that it portended some crisis in the life of her lover. She knew that he was likely to be at sea to-night, and coming down Channel along these very coasts. It might indeed have been his vessel that these desperate men had striven to wreck. She never tried to fight against the conviction that something terrible had befallen Eustace that night; but so convinced was she that God had heard her prayers, and had made of her an instrument for the deliverance and saving of her lover, that she was able to retain her calmness and tranquillity, even through that terrible hour of suspense, saying always to herself—

“Perhaps it is the Father’s way of leading home the erring son. Perhaps it was in the darkness and the storm that He went out to meet him. I think he will be given back to me; but even if not, and he is in the safe-keeping of the Father, I can bear it. But I believe I shall receive him back as from the dead.”

She went to and fro through the house, seeing that her own and her father’s orders were carried out, her face wearing a strange expression of intense expectancy, but her bearing and manner retaining their customary calmness. When everything that could be done in advance had been done, she went down into the hall again. The fire was blazing there and the lights were burning. Upon a table stood refreshments, and all was as she desired to see it. The old butler, who had not gone with the rest of the men, stood in a dim recess, looking out of the window, and half concealed by the curtain. Suddenly he moved quickly towards the door.

“Do you see anything?” asked Bride breathlessly.

“I hear steps,” he answered, and went to the door. The next minute he opened it wide and the Duke entered.

Bride made a quick step forward. Her father’s face was pale and stern. His clothes were wet as from contact with salt water, but his manner was composed, though

indicative of mental disturbance. His first words were to the servant.

"Go or send instantly to Abner Tresithny's cottage, and tell him to come here at once."

The butler disappeared without waiting to hear more. Abner's cottage was on the premises, a little distance from the stable-yard. He could be there in a very short time after the summons reached him; but why was he summoned?

Bride's eyes asked the question her lips could not frame. Her father came forward, and put his hands upon her shoulders.

"Can you be brave to bear bad news, Bride?" he asked; and she saw that his face looked very grave, and that his lips quivered a little involuntarily.

"I think so," she answered steadily. "Is it Eustace?"

She felt him give a slight start.

"How did you know? Who has told you?"

"I hardly know—Eustace himself, I think. I have felt sure the whole time that he has been in peril to-night. Do not be afraid to tell me the worst. Is he dead?"

"I fear so! I fear so! God grant I may be mistaken, but I have no hope—it is the face of the dead!"

There was something in the tone of the voice that bespoke a keener distress than Bride would have looked for her father to show in any matter connected with Eustace. She gave him a quick glance of grateful sympathy, and, moving from his side, went to the table and poured him out a glass of wine. He drank it, and then she said softly—

"Tell me about it."

"I will tell you all I know; it is a hideous tale, but the details will only be known when the wretched miscreants whom we have apprehended are brought before the proper authorities. We know that our light was extinguished

and a false one kindled, in order that some vessel might be deluded to dash itself upon the Bull's Horns, where nothing can save it. This diabolic deed has been done only too well. The men, taken red-handed bringing their boat back full of spoil, could deny nothing. Evidence was too clear against them. We apprehended every man of them, and they are lying bound under a strong guard of our fellows to await the arrival of the officers of the law. But one man said that Saul Tresithny was still upon the wreck, that it was he who had planned all this, and that he was waiting there till they went for another load and fetched him off."

"And you sent a boat for him?" questioned Bride breathlessly.

"The men were for leaving him to his fate, but of course that could not be allowed, and I wished to see for myself the position of the wreck, and to learn all that was possible about her; for we all know that before another tide has risen and fallen she may be dashed off the ledge on which she rests now, and sucked into the treacherous shoals of quicksand."

"Papa," said Bride quickly, interrupting the tale for a moment; "tell me one thing—are any lives saved?"

"None—unless Eustace be living, and I fear he is not;" and as Bride for a moment pressed her hand to her eyes, the Duke took up the thread of his narrative, though always with his face towards the open door, listening and watching intently.

"The sea was falling, and we in the bay were sheltered from its power. We soon reached the wreck, and there found a light burning, but for a moment there was no sign of Tresithny. Then one of our men called out that he saw something in the water—that it was attached to the wreck by a rope. We got hold of the rope and pulled upon it, and drew the floating mass towards us."

"And found—Eustace."

The words were scarcely a whisper. Bride's pale lips moved, but scarce a breath came through them.

"Found Eustace and Saul Tresithny, locked in an embrace so tenacious that it has been impossible to unloose it. How they came to be so locked together no man yet knows. The wreckers declare that there was no living soul on board when they left Saul alone on the wreck. What passed whilst he was there alone none can say. Eustace had a great life-belt passed under his arms, holding him well out of the water. Saul Tresithny's arms were locked in a bear-like embrace around his neck, and his hands were so clenched upon the rope which was attached to the broken mast of the vessel that it was impossible to loosen it. We had to cut the rope when the two men were lifted into the boat. Had Saul been alone, one would have said that he was hauling himself in towards the vessel, from which he had been washed off when unconsciousness had come over him. But how those two came to be locked thus together none can say. I can form no guess. That will be one of the riddles we shall never solve."

"Is Saul dead too?" asked Bride, in an awed voice.

"So far as we can tell, both are dead," answered the Duke; "but until they can be separated it is not possible to be absolutely certain on the point. Saul cannot have been so very long in the water, and the belt supported both well; but there appears no sign of life about either. I think they have both passed away together in the darkness and the storm—master and pupil together—master and pupil! Ah! Eustace, Eustace! what do you think of your teaching now?"

The last words were only just breathed in a tone of gentle sorrow. Bride said nothing, for the sound of measured tramping was borne to her ears, and she looked quickly at her father.

"They are bringing them here, of course?"

"Of course," he answered, with a slight motion of his head. "Whether living or dead, Eustace must lie here; and till Tresithny's grasp can be unloosened we cannot separate them."

"Let Saul lie here too, papa," said Bride suddenly. "Whether living or dead, let us shelter him. If he has greatly sinned, he has suffered terribly. We do not carry enmity beyond the grave, nor punishment after a man has been so struck down."

"I have sent for his grandfather. I will settle with him about that unhappy young man. Bride, my dear, I think you had better go. This will be no sight for you."

But Bride slipped her hand within her father's arm, and looked beseechingly into his face.

"Do not send me away till I have seen him. You know that I love Eustace, papa, and he loves me. I believe that this is God's way of giving him back to me. I can bear it whichever way it turns."

The Duke said no more. He recognised in Bride that inherent strength of character, born of a perfect faith, which had characterised her mother. He let her stay beside him as the heavy steps drew nearer and nearer, and the hand upon his arm did not quiver as the bearers appeared with their strange load at the great door.

In they came, panting with the effort, for the ascent to the castle was steep, and the load a heavy one. And when once within the shelter of the hall, they were forced, without waiting for leave, to lay it down and gasp for breath.

Bride stepped forward and looked. There was nothing ghastly in the sight to her—only something unspeakably solemn and mysterious.

The faces of both men were white and rigid, but in no wise distorted. There was a calm nobility of aspect about Eustace, which suggested the hope that the soul was at peace in the midst of the terrors of that fearful night.

Saul's brow was knitted, and his lips were set in lines of vehement resolution, as though not even death could obliterate from his face the intensity of his great resolve.

As Bride looked, she said within herself, "He died trying to save Eustace;" and though she could not tell how such a thing could be, she felt the sense of certainty rise up glad and strong within her. If his life had been a wild and wicked one, might not his death have witnessed to the dawn of the eternal love in his darkened heart? Might not this sudden act of self-sacrifice have been the Divine spark kindling in his soul, and lighting his way to God?

And then from two different doors entered on the one hand Abner, and the other the doctor, who had been summoned in hot haste by a mounted messenger some time before; and Bride, with one last lingering look upon her lover's face, silently withdrew, to return to her vigil and her prayers, till she could learn what was the verdict about these two men so strangely locked together.





CHAPTER XXI

FROM THE DEAD

MY lady, I cannot stay, but I must be the one to bring the news. He is living after all."

Bride had risen from her knees at the sound of hurrying steps along the corridor, and now stood face to face with the faithful old nurse, who with the doctor had been fighting the two hours' battle, in the teeth of almost hopeless despair, over the rigid and motionless form of Eustace Marchmont, and now she stood white and panting before her young mistress, but with tears of gladness standing in her eyes.

Bride raised her face for a moment, her eyes alight with the intensity of her thanksgiving. The dawn was just stealing in through the uncurtained window. She looked for a moment at the crimson blush in the east, and then suddenly bent her head and kissed the faithful woman beside her.

"Thank God!" she said very softly; "and thank you, dear nurse, for I know how you have been toiling for him—and for me."

"Oh, my Ladybird, it would have broken my heart if he had slipped away out of life just when—but there, there! I mustn't stop to talk. And we mustn't build too much on keeping him here. He's been a terrible time in the water, and been fearfully dashed about. He'll have a fight to pull through; but then he's young and strong, and he'll

have the best sort of hope to help him. There, deary, there, there! I can't linger longer. There's a deal to be done, and the doctor has to go when he can spare a moment to look to that other poor fellow. I don't know which is the worst of the two, but they are both of them alive at least."

"Saul too? Ah! I am glad!" cried Bride; and then the nurse hurried away, and she sat down after the long strain of those strange hours, and tried to collect her scattered thoughts.

Eustace living—though by no means out of danger! Ah! but was it not enough just now to be assured that the life was still in him? Surely since God had given him back in answer to her prayers, He had spared him for some great purpose. He had brought him to the very gates of death, but had brought him back therefrom already. Was not that evidence that he was spared for some good purpose? Might she not look forward in faith and confidence to Him, Who had saved him from these terrible bodily perils, that He would also be with him in any other trial that might lie before him, bodily or spiritual? Need she be fearful or troubled any more after the wonderful experiences of the past night? Eustace had been given back to her prayers. What need she fear when that proof of Fatherly love was hers?

Bride mechanically put the finishing touches to her toilet, and washed from her face the traces of her long vigil; then, unable to remain inactive any longer, she left her room and descended the staircase, the light broadening and strengthening in the sky as she did so, as the sun rose from behind banks of low-lying cloud, and looked forth upon the new day now begun.

The great door at the far end of the hall stood wide open to the breezy morning, and even as Bride reached the foot of the staircase a tall figure darkened it for a moment, and Mr. Tremodart came in with an uncertain

air, glancing about him here and there, as if in search of something or some one.

Bride stepped forward and held out her hand.

"You have heard?" she asked briefly.

"Ah yes! it is a terrible thing, a terrible thing! Lady Bride, it makes me feel that I must send in my resignation to the Bishop, and ask him to appoint another pastor to this flock. Surely had I done my duty, they would not now be such savages and fiends! I have been down with them, poor miserable men! I have been hearing their confession. They have been led away by a spirit stronger than their own. The Lord forgive me! Perhaps had I been more to them and more with them, they would not have hearkened to such evil counsel!"

The clergyman's remorse was painful to see. Bride had grown to feel a great liking and respect for Mr. Tremordart during the past year. That he was somewhat out of his element as a parish priest, she never attempted to deny. That he had been placed in his present position without any real aptitude for his vocation, he never himself denied; but he had tried to do his duty according to his own lights; and though often too much engrossed in his favourite pursuits to give all the time he should have done to his flock, he had never neglected to respond to a summons from any one of them, however personally inconvenient, and had always striven to relieve distress, both of body and mind, as far as in him lay, though his methods were sometimes clumsy, and his words halting and lame.

Still on the whole he had won the respect and liking of his flock, and the confidence of the black sheep better, perhaps, than a more truly earnest and devoted man might have done. The fishermen were not afraid of him. They knew he understood their ways of thinking, and had a sympathy with them even in their peccadillos. He did not receive or purchase smuggled goods, as too many

of his profession did in those days; but he did not look with any very great displeasure on a traffic that he had been used to all his life, and which seemed almost a part of the economy of life. But with all his faults and his easy-going ways, he had never for a moment encouraged indifference to human life or suffering; and the knowledge that the men of Bride's Bay had deliberately lured to her doom a great vessel, from which only one man had been rescued alive, was a terrible thought. The moment the news had been brought to him, Mr. Tremordart had hastened down to the shore to learn the truth of the matter, and had now come to the castle with a grave face and heavy heart, to seek news of the survivor, and the man who had been found with him.

"Perhaps we might all have done more for them than we did," said Bride gently; "but men will listen so much more readily to the voice of the tempter than to those who would hold them back from their sinful deeds. And Saul Tresithny had such power over them! I fear it was he who led them on."

"Ay! ay! there can be no doubting that. One and all, they all say it. 'Twas his doing—his planning from first to last. They, poor fellows, thought of the spoil to be had, and listened with greedy ears; but he was thinking darker thoughts, I fear. They say he wanted nothing for himself. All his mind was fixed upon some evil hope of vengeance. His hatred for mankind had driven him well-nigh mad. Ah! Lady Bride, I think that we may well say that if God is Love—as we have His blessed assurance—then the devil is—hatred. For sure only the devil himself could so have inspired that spirit of hatred which could vent itself in such an act as that of last night."

"Indeed, I think so," answered Bride, in a low tone of great feeling. "It is too terrible to think of. What will happen to those poor men? Where are they now?"

"The officers have taken them. I fear they will be committed for trial. I scarce know the penalty—transportation, I should think. Perhaps a few may be released—a few of the younger men; but example will be made of some. It would scarce be right to wish it otherwise. That noble vessel! and all hands lost, and every soul on board save one! Ah me! ah me! And the men of St. Bride the culprits! I could sink to the ground for shame!"

"Do you know who the survivor is?" asked Bride.

"Nay; I did but hear he had been carried here—he and Tresithny, locked in one embrace, none knowing whether either were alive or dead. I came for news of them."

"They are both living—now," answered Bride, with a strange light in her eyes, "though we must not build too much on that. The survivor from the wreck is our kinsman, Eustace Marchmont."

"God bless my soul! you don't say so?" cried the clergyman, starting back in great astonishment.

"Yes," answered Bride; "we were expecting him shortly, and he spoke of coming by sea in one of the new steamships. That was the one which was wrecked last night. Eustace was there. He had on a great life-belt, and Saul was clinging round him when they were carried in. Saul had been left behind on the wreck whilst the other men took their first load of spoil to shore. What happened then nobody yet knows; but when my father and his men reached the wreck, they found those two in the water, floating near to it at the end of a rope—whether alive or dead, it was hours before anybody knew."

"You don't say so? What an extraordinary thing! Do you think they were struggling together in the water? Could Saul have been striving to do some injury to Mr. Marchmont——?"

"Oh no, no," cried Bride quickly; "I am sure that was

not so. What it all means I cannot tell yet ; but I know that Saul loved Eustace. I think he was the only being in the world he has ever truly loved. I cannot help thinking he was trying to save him—trying to draw him out of the water. But we may never know the truth of it. Yet I shall never believe that Saul would lift up a hand against Eustace.”

“ I trust not—I trust not. Ah ! poor fellow, it will be a mercy for him if he die a natural death from exposure. He has nothing to live for now, I fear, save transportation or the gallows.”

Bride turned pale and took a backward step. That aspect of the case had not struck her before.

“ Ah ! ” she exclaimed, with a little gasp, and was silent, trying to take it all in. Oh, that blind, misguided nature, warped and deformed by unreasoning and unreasonable hatred ! How had the springs of nobility lying latent there been poisoned at their very source ! How had the man’s whole career been blasted and shattered through the entering in of that demon of jealousy and hatred, which had gradually struggled with and overpowered every other emotion, and become absolute master of the man ! And there had been a time when Saul had been spoken of as a youth of such promise. Alas ! how had that promise been fulfilled ?

Bride and the clergyman stood facing each other in silence, the morning sunshine lying in broad bands across the paved floor of the hall, and the sounds of life from without speaking cheerful things of the awakening day. The butler came forward and broke the spell of silent musing by informing his young mistress that breakfast had been carried in, but that His Grace was still resting after the fatigues of the night, and did not wish to be disturbed.

“ Then you will breakfast with me, Mr. Tremodart,” said Bride, “ and then we will ask for fresh news of the patients.”

The meal was a silent one, but both stood in need of refreshment and felt strengthened by it. At the conclusion Bride rose up, and looking at her companion said—

“Will you come with me? I am going to ask news of him at his door. Perhaps, if he is conscious, he will like to see you. I fear his life will be in danger for some time. He may feel the need of your presence.”

“I—I—hardly know whether I could help him if such were the case,” answered Mr. Tremodart, always rather nervous at the prospect of being called upon for spiritual ministrations, especially by those of the educated and superior classes. He was not a man of ready speech, and felt his deficiency greatly. “Perhaps Mr. St. Aubyn would come,” he suggested. “I think he knows Mr. Marchmont better than I.”

“I think it is likely he will come when he hears,” answered Bride; “but we belong to you too, Mr. Tremodart, and at least you will come and hear the news from the sick-room?”

He was very anxious to do so, and followed the girl up the staircase and along the corridors. Bride paused at length at a half-open door. It led into a pleasant room furnished as a study, and beyond it was the bedroom, from which proceeded a quiet murmur of voices.

Bride held her breath to listen. Was it Eustace speaking? No, she thought it was the doctor; but was there not a still lower voice, a mere whisper? or was it only the beating of her heart?

The door of communication opened suddenly, and the nurse came out. Her face lighted at the sight of Bride.

“Oh, my lady, I think he is asking for you. We can’t quite make out his words. He has no voice, and scarce any breath; but I saw his lips move, and I’m almost sure he’s saying your name. We can’t tell whether he knows us yet—whether his mind is there. But I think if you would go in to him we might be able to tell.”

Bride looked at her companion.

"Let us go in together," she said, feeling a strange desire for the support of another presence. She hardly knew what it was that she would be called upon to witness in that room; but at least Eustace was there—Eustace was still living; and if he wanted her, was not that enough?

Her face was very pale, but her manner was quite composed as she walked forward, passed the screen, and stood beside the bed.

Upon the bed, perfectly flat, with only one thin pillow beneath his head, lay Eustace, as motionless and almost as rigid as though life were extinct. His arms lay passively outside the bed-clothing just as they had been placed. The left arm was bound up in a splint, but the right lay almost as helpless and powerless beside him. There was a white bandage about his head, and his face was almost as white as the linen. The lips were ashen grey, and a shadow seemed to rest upon the face, robbing it of almost all semblance of life. Only the eyes retained any of their colour. They were sunken and dim, but there was life in their glance yet; and as Bride stood beside him, and softly spoke his name, a sudden gleam of joyous recognition flashed from them, and the white lips curved to the faint semblance of a smile.

"Bride," he said, in the lowest whisper.

She took the powerless hand in his, and then bent down and kissed him.

"I am here, Eustace, I am with you. You will live for my sake," she said, in soft clear tones, which seemed to penetrate the mists of weakness closing him in. The dim eyes brightened more and more, and fixed themselves upon her fair, sweet face. She felt a very slight answering pressure of the fingers she held, and again she heard the whisper of her name.

The doctor was standing a little distance off. He had

known Bride from her infancy, and was watching the little scene with extreme interest, both professional and personal. Now he came forward and stood on the other side of the bed; his kind old face was beaming with satisfaction.

"That is good, very good, Lady Bride," he said; "I can see what is the medicine our patient wants. You have done more for him in a minute than I have been able to do all these hours. We want him to get a grip on life again—just to help him to hold on to it till Nature can make up for the terrible exhaustion of those hours in the water. Now look here, it's most important he should take the hot soup and the cordial nurse has over there. We can't get more than a few drops down at a time, but perhaps you will be more successful. We are keeping up the animal heat by outward applications, but we must keep the furnace inside going still. Try what you can do for him, my dear. I think you have made him understand as we have not succeeded in doing yet."

The nurse came to the bedside with cup and spoon, and Bride took them from her hand. With a gentle tenderness almost like that of a mother she bent over Eustace, raised his head as she had been wont to do for her mother in her long last illness, and gave him what the doctor bade her.

He swallowed it without a murmur, perfectly understanding her voice and touch. Three or four spoonfuls were taken in this way, the doctor looking on and slightly rubbing his hands.

"If you can stay with him two hours, and feed him like that every ten minutes, Lady Bride," he said, "I think we shall see a change for the better by that time. Everything depends on keeping up the vital power. It was down to the very lowest ebb when he was brought in. If he had not the most magnificent constitution, he could never have survived all that exposure. It will be every-

thing if he can be kept up. Will you be his nurse for to-day, and keep guard over him? You can do more than all the rest of us put together. Are you willing?"

Bride desired nothing better. She had hardly dared to let herself hope to see Eustace for many days, and here she was established beside him as head-nurse, and the person most needful to his recovery. Her heart bounded within her as the doctor and Mr. Tremodart stole away together to visit the other patient, and she found herself left in charge of her lover.

Yes, she called him so now without hesitation or fear. She had long known that love was stealing more and more into her heart, and latterly she had not been afraid to face the thought and to follow it to its conclusion.

She loved Eustace, and he loved her. She had heard that from his own lips before she had had any love to give to him. But since she had begun to pray for him, to intercede for him, to bring his name into the presence of God day by day and night by night, not in despondency, but in perfect faith, faith that her prayers for him would be heard and answered, and that the Father would turn his heart homewards, and go forth to meet him when once his steps were homeward set—since she had begun to think of him and pray for him thus, love had gradually stolen into her heart; whilst since the strange events of the past night, when their spirits had met in the darkness and the storm, and God had used her as an instrument for the saving of her lover's life, she had not feared to recognise that love, and to call Eustace her own.

His eyes were turned now upon her with a restful look of infinite content. He did not try to speak; he had not strength to return the soft pressure of her hand from time to time, but he lay and looked at her; and when she bent over him, and spoke his name in words that sounded like a caress, and touched his brow with her lips, or smoothed away the dank tumbled hair, he smiled a slight smile of

restful peace, and he never resisted her pleading voice when she put food to his lips, and bade him make the effort to swallow it "for her sake."

Two hours had gone by thus, and Bride began to see a slight, indefinite change in her patient. The grey shadow was lighter than it had been. There was more brightness in the eyes; once or twice she had heard a whispered "thank you" spoken, and when the sound of the opening door fell upon their ears, he as well as she looked to see who was coming—a plain proof of a distinct advance in his condition.

It was the Duke. He looked weary and worn and pale. He had not escaped without some exhaustion and suffering from the effects of the night's adventure, and was feeling old and shaken, as indeed he looked. But sleep had restored him to some extent, and now his anxiety had brought him to Eustace's side. His face lighted with pleasure as he saw the look of recognition on the white face, and noted that Bride had taken up her station beside the bed.

He came forward and stood beside them, looking down at his young kinsman.

"You are better, Eustace?" he said kindly; and to Bride's surprise the answer came quite audibly, though only in a very faint whisper—

"Bride is giving me new life."

"That is well, very well. Do not talk. Keep quiet, and Bride will take care of you;" and at that moment the doctor came back, and looked at his patient with an emphatic nod of approval.

"Very good, very good, couldn't be better. Lady Bride, if you will only go on as successfully as you have begun, we shall have him round the corner by the time the day is over. A magnificent constitution—truly a magnificent one! Could not have believed it! Gave very little signs of life four hours ago—just a flicker; but I was afraid to

hope too much, and now—why, there's quite a pulse, and no fever. Wonderful! wonderful!”

Eustace was growing drowsy by this time—a very favourable symptom in the doctor's sight. The murmur of voices about him induced a state of dreamy torpor. His eyes closed, and he dropped off into a light dose, as people do who are very weak, but have no fever or pain. Bride looked up with a smile at her father.

“He will be better if he sleeps,” she said. “Will you not sit down, papa? you look so tired.”

The doctor gave a shrewd glance at the Duke's face, and seconded his daughter's recommendation. They drew a little away from the bed, and Bride asked softly—

“What about Saul?”

The doctor shook his head.

“He is in a raging fever. Whether it is an affection of the brain, or the effects of the exposure and wetting on a constitution already much enfeebled, I hardly know yet, but he is in raving delirium at present, and I doubt if we pull him through. Poor fellow! poor fellow! It is a fine character blasted and ruined, a fine career flung away for the gratification of senseless passion! Ah me!—we live in a world of perplexities. The history of that young man has been a source of wonderment and sorrow to the whole place. I fear it is drawing to its close now.”

“Perhaps that is the happiest thing for him,” said Bride softly, “if only——”

She did not finish her sentence—there was no need. All who knew the young man's story could finish it themselves. As the girl sat beside Eustace whilst the hours sped by, each one renewing her hope and sense of thankful relief in seeing the flame of life within him burn more steadily and brightly, her thoughts were much with that other patient lying not so far away, wondering what was going on in his soul, and whether this chastening had indeed been for the salvation of his soul. Towards evening

Eustace was so wonderfully recovered that he had spoken a few short sentences, and would have told her something of the wreck of the vessel, only that consecutive speech was forbidden him. The grey shadow had vanished, a faint colour had come into his lips. He was able to take such nourishment as his condition required, and to dispense with much of the outward application of heat. At last he fell into a sound, refreshing, and perfectly natural sleep, and Bride, at the suggestion of the nurse, stole away to get a mouthful of air on the terrace before dark, after which she went herself to that other part of the house where Saul lay, to try to get speech of Abner, who was with his grandson, as he had been ever since he was brought in the previous night.

The old man came out to her, looking bent and aged, but with a light in his eyes which Bride saw at once.

"Is he better?" she asked eagerly; and the answer was curious.

"I trust and hope that he is, my lady. I think that he has prayed."

"Prayed?" repeated Bride, her eyes lighting in quick response. "Ah, Abner!—then he must indeed be better!"

"I think he will die," said Abner, with quiet calmness; "but what matters the death of the corruptible body, if the spark of immortal life and love be quickened in the soul? My lady, in his ravings of fever my boy has laid bare his soul to me—all the terrible darkness, all the wild hatred, all the fearful thoughts which went to prompt that last dread act of his life. But he has told other things as well. He has told how, whilst he sat alone upon the wreck, gloating over the crime he had committed, he saw an object in the water, and knew that one of his victims was near him. I cannot paint that scene as he has painted it in his ravings, but I think I see it all. He turned his light upon the victim, and he saw the face of Mr. Marchmont, his friend. Then I think he saw

his handiwork as it appears in the sight of God. He saw himself the blackest of sinners, and with a prayer on his lips that he might be permitted to make this atonement, he sprang into the water to strive and save Mr. Marchmont, who else must surely have been sucked back into the cruel quicksands lying so close at hand."

"Ah!" cried Bride softly, "I said so—I thought so!"

"So he tied himself to the vessel—ah! he has been acting it all so fearfully, that I can see it as though I had been there!—he flung himself into the sea and grappled with the floating figure, trying to pull it to the wreck and place it in safety. Ah! how he must have struggled with the wind and tide that were fighting against him! but in his mortal agony he turned in prayer to the God he had despised and defied, and prayed to Him that this life—this one life—might be given to him. Ah! how many times has that prayer passed his lips to-day—'God help me! God give me strength! God be merciful to me, a sinner!' He knows not what he says now, but he knew it when he lifted his heart in prayer in the hour of his extremest need. It was not for his own life he prayed, but for the life of the one he sought to save. I truly believe that in those terrible moments he lived through a lifetime of agony and repentance. God does not measure time as we do. I think He will accept those moments of agonised penitence as He accepted the repentance of the thief upon the cross. I think he looked to his Saviour in that hour of mortal weakness and despair, when life and all seemed slipping away. Last night was the witness of the crowning sin of his reckless life, yet I believe, by the grace of God, it was witness, too, of a penitent malefactor turning towards Him at the last. This gives me more hope and joy than I have ever known before for him."

Bride went away with a great awe upon her—a deep respect and sympathy for the faith of this patient

man, and a sense of the intense reality of the power of prayer such as she had scarcely experienced in her life before. She knew that Abner had been praying for the conversion of Saul, even as she had been praying that Eustace might turn in faith towards the God of Salvation. Once it had seemed as though nothing could conquer the invincible wildness of the one or the intellectual scepticism of the other. But God had put forth His hand in power, and had caused that even the powers of evil should aid in bringing about the answer. She wanted to think it out. She wanted to be alone in her awe and her thankfulness. She went swiftly up to her own room, and sank upon her knees, burying her face in her hands.





CHAPTER XXII

SAUL TRESITHNY

HIS eyes opened slowly upon the unfamiliar room. The shaft of sunlight slanting in from the west shone upon a comfortable apartment, far larger and loftier than anything to which he had been accustomed. The window was larger, the fireplace was wider, and there was a clear fire of coal burning in the grate, very different from the peat and driftwood fires to which he had been long accustomed. The only familiar object in the room was the figure of his grandfather, bending over the big Bible on the table, as he had been so used to see it from childhood, when he awakened from sleep in the early hours of the night, and looked about him to know where he was.

For a moment a dreamy wonderment came over him. He asked himself whether he had not been dreaming a long, long troubled dream of manhood and strife, and whether, after all, he were not a little child again, living in his grandfather's cottage, happy in his games upon the shore, and looking eagerly forward to the time when he should be a man and could follow the fortunes of fishermen and smugglers, or have a big garden to care for like Abner.

But this dreamy condition did not last long. There was a bowed look about Abner, and his hair was altogether too white for him to be identified with the Abner

of twenty years back. Saul raised his own hand and looked at it curiously. It was shrunk to skin and bone, but a great hand still, with indications of vanished power and strength. The dark sombre eyes roved round and round the room. Memory was awakening, the mists of fever and delirium were passing away. Suddenly Saul seemed to see as in a panorama the whole map of his past life rolled out before him. It was written in characters of fire upon the bare walls of the room. Everywhere he looked he saw his wild and evil deeds depicted. Why was it that they looked black and hideous to him now, when hitherto he had gloried in them—gloated over them? He saw, last of all, the doomed vessel bearing straight down upon the cruel rocks. And now he seemed to see a face on board that vessel—the face of one he loved—the face of the man who had held out his hand in friendship, when (as he believed) all the world beside had turned its back upon him. He saw the face of this friend looking at him with a deep reproach in the eyes, and a sudden groan of anguish broke from Saul's lips as he stretched out his hands to stay the course of the doomed vessel.

At the sound of that groan Abner rose quickly and came forward to the bedside. The ray of dying daylight was fading already, and the shadow of the winter's evening closing in; and yet in the dimness about the bed, Abner thought he saw something new in Saul's face.

"Saul, my lad," he said gently, "do you know me?"

"Tu be sure I du," answered Saul, and wondered why his voice sounded so distant and hollow. "What's the matter, grandfather?"

"You have been in a fever for many days, my lad, and didn't know anybody about yu. What is it, boy? Don't excite yourself. Yu must be kept quite quiet."

Saul's face was changing every moment, turning from red to pale and pale to red. He was struggling with

emotion and a rush of recollection. For a moment Abner's voice and presence had arrested the course of his memories; but now they came surging back.

"Grandfather, tell me," he cried, struggling to sit up and then sinking back in his weakness, "what happened?—how did I get out of the water? Where is Mr. Marchmont?"

"Here in the castle. You were brought in together. They could not loose your clasp upon him for a long time."

"And where is he? Is he alive?"

"Yes—alive, and like to live."

Saul suddenly pressed his hands together and broke into wild weeping.

"Thank God! thank God!" he cried, his whole frame shaken with sobs. "Grandfather, pray for me—you know I never learned to pray for myself—at least I have well-nigh forgotten now. But down on your knees and thank God for that for me! May be He will hear *yu*. It must have been He that saved him; for the devil was at my ear all the while prompting me to let him die."

Abner was already on his knees, with a thanksgiving of his own to offer. He had prayed too much and too earnestly, both in secret and before his fellow-men, to lack words now in this hour of intense gratitude and thanksgiving. In rugged yet not ill-chosen words he lifted up his voice and gave thanks to God for His great and unspeakable mercies in giving back this one life from the destruction that had come upon all besides; and in permitting the very man whose sin had brought about this fearful thing to be His instrument for the salvation of the life of his friend. He pleaded for mercy for the sinner with an impassioned eloquence which bespoke a spirit deeply moved. He brought before the Lord the sins and shortcomings of this erring man, now

stretched on a bed of sickness, and besought that the cleansing blood of Christ might wash them all away. He pleaded for Saul as he never could have pleaded for himself. He brought together all those eternal promises of mercy which are to the sinner as the anchor and stay of the soul in the deep and bitter waters of remorse. He pleaded with his Redeemer for the soul of his grandson with a fervour only inspired by a love and a faith too deep to be daunted by any considerations as to the weight of iniquity to be pardoned, or the lack of faith in the one thus prayed for. And Saul, lying helpless and tempest-tossed, listened to this pleading, and found his tears bursting forth again. He had seen before all the black and crushing iniquity of his own past record, but now was brought before his eyes a picture of the infinite and ineffable love of a dying Saviour—the Lord of Glory crucified for *him*—bearing *his* sins upon the Cross of shame—stretching out His wounded hands and bidding *him* come to that Cross and lay down his burden there. It was too much for Saul, softened as he was by the sense that God had already answered his prayer even in the midst of his sin and wickedness, and had given him the one petition, the only one he ever remembered to have offered. The whole conception of such divine mercy was too much—it broke down all his pride and reserve and sullen defiance—it broke his heart and made it as the heart of a little child. His tears gushed forth. He clasped his hands, and lifted them in supplication to his Saviour. He could not have found words for his own guilt, but he could follow the earnest words of the grandfather, whose simple piety he had hitherto held in a species of lofty contempt. And in that still evening hour, with the dying day about them, and the shadow of death hovering as it were in the very air above them (for Saul was dying, although he knew it not yet; and Abner knew that his hours were numbered, though he

might linger for a day or two yet), the erring soul turned in penitence and love to the Saviour in Whose death lay the only hope of pardon, and in Whose resurrection-life the only hope of that life immortal beyond the grave, beyond the power of the second death, and found at last peace and rest, in spite of all the blackness of past sin.

For when the Saviour's Blood has washed away the sin, the blackness can no longer remain. Humble penitence and contrite love remain, but the misery and despair are taken away. He bears the grief and carries the sorrow; He takes the shame, the curse, the wrath of a holy and a just God. It was a thought almost too overwhelming for Saul to bear. It broke his heart and humbled him to the very dust. But he no longer fought against the infinite love—no longer hardened his heart against the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of comfort and sanctification. He had felt the blessedness of the pardoning love, and he yearned for the guiding light that should show him how he might direct his steps for the time that remained to him.

Of that time he had not yet thought. Those hours had been too crowded with extreme emotion. He had passed through a crisis of spiritual existence which made all earthly things dwarf into insignificance. It was only when the hour of midnight tolled forth, and he recollected that a new day had begun for him, that he first folded his hands in prayer, lifting up his heart to God in thanksgiving for the light which was now in his soul, and then turning his gaze upon Abner, who had never moved from his side all this while, asked softly—

“What day is it?”

“Sunday, my lad. A new day and a new week. I little thought upon the last Sunday what the Lord had in store for me for this. The Lord's Day, my lad—the Lord's Day. That's what I love to call it. May we

have grace to keep it to His glory. Saul, my lad, you have no fears now?"

"Fears of what, grandfather?"

"Fears about the Lord's love—about the forgiveness He has granted you?"

A singular radiance came over Saul's face.

"No—I can't doubt it. It's too wonderful to be understood. But I can feel it right through me. I've no fear."

"And would you fear, my boy, if you had to see Him face to face—if you should be called upon to meet Him—if He should come this very night to gather to Himself those that wait for His coming?"

Saul looked earnestly into the old man's face. He knew something of Abner's belief and hope, though it was now several years since he had spoken of it in his hearing. As a youth his grandfather, who was slowly gathering up fragments from the prophetic Scriptures, and, in common with many others who met for prayer and meditation, beginning to awaken to a belief in the sudden and instantaneous appearing of the Lord on earth, had striven to convince the boy of the truth of this belief, and awaken within his soul that burning love and longing after the coming and kingdom of the Lord which was stealing upon his own. Saul, however, had not been responsive. To him it was all old wives' fables, and he had sometimes mocked and sometimes sneered, so that Abner had soon ceased to urge him, trusting that faith would come at last through the mercy of God, though not by the will of man. Nevertheless the foundations had been laid, inasmuch as Saul now understood what his grandfather meant, and could even recall the words of Scriptural promise in which Christ had spoken of His return, and the Apostles had exhorted the early churches to remain steadfast in the hope of it. And as these memories crowded in upon his mind and brain now—now that

the love of the Lord had awakened within him, and he was only longing for some means of showing that love and abasing himself at His feet in penitence and adoration—the memory of these words and promises came back to him charged with a wonderful beauty and significance, and clasping his hands together he replied in a choked voice—

“It is too wonderful and beautiful to be believed, but He has said it. If He were to come to-night, grandfather, I dare scarcely to hope that such an one as I should be counted worthy to be caught away to meet Him in the air; but if I might but look upon His glorified face it would be enough. He would know how much I love Him, and how I hate myself and my vile life. I should see Him—I should be able to look up to Him and say—‘My Lord and my God!’ I do not even ask more!”

Abner was silent for a moment, and then said in a voice that quivered with the intensity of his emotion—

“And, my lad, if the Lord delays His own coming, but calls to you to meet Him in another way, would you be afraid?”

Saul looked at him quickly, and read in a moment all that was in Abner’s soul.

“Do you mean that I shall die?” he asked.

There was silence for a moment, and then Abner spoke—

“It may not be to-night, but it must be soon. The doctor says you strained your heart so terrible hard that night, and there was something amiss with you before. I don’t rightly understand his words, but you’ve never been the same since that fever, and when you were knocked down by the horses they did you a mischief you’ve never got over. That night on the wreck was the last straw, as folks say. There’s something broke and hurt past mending. You won’t have no pain, but things

can't go on long. You'll not be long before you see your Saviour, my lad; for I'm very sure we go to be with Him, even though we may not share His glory till the blessed day of the Resurrection."

A strange awe fell upon Saul. His eyes looked straight at Abner with an expression the latter could hardly fathom. Was it fear? Was it joy? Was it triumph? He did not know, but Saul's next words gave him the clue.

"It is goodness past belief—I can't understand it!"

"What, my boy?"

"Why, that the Lord should take me to Himself, when He might have left me to a life of misery and degradation in a far-off land with criminals and evil-doers, or sent me to the scaffold, as I was nearly sent before. After such a life as I've led, to take me away to His beautiful land of rest. It's too much—it's too much! I don't know how to thank Him aright. Grandfather, get down upon your knees again and tell Him—though He knows it, to be sure—that for love of Him I'm willing to live that life of misery, or die the shameful death I've deserved, and led others to, I fear. Let it be only as He wills, but to be taken away from it all to be with Him seems more blessedness and goodness than I can rightly understand."

Tears were running down Abner's face. His voice was broken by sobs.

"Oh, my boy! my boy! if that's how you feel, I've no fears for you. That's the feeling we should all strive after. Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: so that, living or dying, we are the Lord's. If it's so with thee, my boy, there's nought else to wish for thee. The peace that passes all understanding will be with thee to the end. Oh, bless the Lord! thank the Lord! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!"

For many minutes there was in that chamber of death such a sense of joy and peace as was indeed a foretaste of the everlasting peace of God. Saul lay and looked out before him through the casement, through which a very young moon was just glinting. It was a strange thought that before that moon waned his body would be lying stiff and cold beneath the churchyard sod. But there was no fear in Saul's mind. Fear had never been a friend to him, and now the perfect love of his crucified and ascended Lord had driven out all fear. Yet even with the prospect of that wondrous change to pass upon him, Saul's thoughts were not all of himself. He listened to all there was to know of the men he had lured and tempted to this great crime, and heaved a sigh of relief to hear that the magistrates had themselves dealt with the cases of the younger men—men some of them little more than lads, who had plainly been led away by their associates, and had had a lesson they would not be likely to forget. Only six had been committed for trial, and these were all men of bad character and reckless lives. Their fate might likely be a hard one, but they were to have counsel to defend them, and stress was to be laid upon the action of Saul in the matter, and the part he had taken in urging the crime upon them. Saul made a full confession of all his share to Abner that night, and made him promise to attend the trial and repeat this before the judges if possible. It might militate in their favour perhaps, and Saul directed that his boat and all that he had should be sold and given to the wives of the two men out of the six who were married; and having settled all this with his grandfather, he felt his mind relieved of a part of its burden, and lay quiet and exhausted for some time.

He had fallen into a doze when Abner aroused him to take food, and looking up quickly he asked—

"Where are we now? I don't know this place."

"It's a room in the castle—in the servants' block,"

answered Abner. "I told yu they could not get your clasp loosened from Mr. Marchmont's neck. They had tu bring yu both here, and then the doctor would not let yu be taken away—not even so far as my cottage. Yu were brought here, and yu've had the same care and attention as Mr. Marchmont himself. The doctor went to and fro betwixt yu all that night, and has been three and four times a day tu see yu ever since."

A little flicker passed over Saul's face. He remembered, as a thing long since past, his old hatred of the class above him. Now he could only feel love for all men—a natural outcome of the intense and burning love for his Lord which was filling all his heart.

"If I could only see him once more!" he said softly.

"See what?"

"Mr. Marchmont."

But Abner shook his head, and such an expression of gravity came over his face that Saul cried out quickly—

"What is it? Yu said he was doin' well!"

"Yes—that is what we heard at first. It is true tu—so far as it goes. When we feared he would die, it seemed everything to know that his life was spared; but after that came terrible bad news tu. His life is safe—the doctor says he will live years and years—to be an old man like enough; but it's doubtful whether he will ever walk again. He's been hurt in the back, and is what folks call half paralysed. He's got the feelin's in his limbs, but no power. He lies on his back, and there he'll lie for years. He may get better very slowly, they say. A great doctor from London has been down, and says with his strength and youth he may bit by bit get back his strength and power; but anyhow it'll be a question of years; and meantime there he'll lie like a log, and have to be tended and cared for like a baby."

Saul put his hand before his eyes and Abner stopped

short, realising that perhaps he had said too much, and that what had grown familiar to him during these past days had come on Saul as a shock.

And indeed it might well do so; for if any one in so different a position in life could estimate the terrible death-in-life of such a fate for one with all Eustace's enthusiasm and ardent thirst for active work, Saul Tresithny could; for Eustace had talked with him as man to man, and had told him of his personal aims and ambitions and purposes as a man of his class seldom does to one in a sphere so entirely different.

"Crippled for life—perhaps! Crippled through my crime! O my God, can there be forgiveness for this? Ah! yes—His Blood washes away *all* sin. But my punishment seems greater than I can bear!"

He lay still for a few moments and then half rose up in bed.

"I must see him—I must! I must ask his pardon on my knees. If my Saviour has pardoned my guilt, I must yet ask pardon of him whom I have so grievously wronged. Grandfather, help me!—I must go to him. I cannot die till I have seen him once again!"

In great perplexity and distress, Abner strove to reason with the excited patient, and great was his relief when the doctor appeared suddenly upon the scene.

Inquiring what all the commotion was about, and learning that Saul had recovered his senses, but had grown excited in his desire to see Mr. Marchmont once more, he thrust out his under lip and regarded the young man intently, his finger upon his patient's wrist all the while. Then he spoke to him quietly and soothingly.

"I will let you see him to-morrow, if possible," he said kindly. "I understand your feeling; but to-night you must be content to wait and gather a little strength. Mr. Marchmont is sleeping, and had better not be disturbed; but if you sleep too, the hours will soon pass.

To-morrow I will do what I can to gratify you," and having quieted Saul and administered a soothing draught, he drew Abner with him outside the door.

"Can he really do it?" asked the old man wonderingly. "I thought he was like to die at any sudden movement or exertion."

"Yes, that is true; but there are cases where repose of mind does more than rest of body. Saul is so near to the gates of death that it matters little what he does or does not do. How the heart's action keeps up at all in the present condition of the organ I do not know; but the end cannot be far off. If he is bent on this I shall not thwart him beyond a certain point. He may have forgotten by the morning; but if not, we must see what we can do to get him there. The distance is very short—only a few steps along this corridor, and through the swing door, and you are close to Mr. Marchmont's room. I think the exertion of movement will try him less than the tossing and restlessness of unfulfilled expectation and desire. Let him have his night in peace, if possible. But if the desire should grow too strong upon him, let him have his way. It cannot do more than hasten the inevitable end by a brief span. I am not sure whether his strength will not desert him at the first attempt to move, and he may give it up of his own free will; but do not thwart him beyond a certain point. We doctors always try to give dying men their way. It is cruelty to thwart them save to gain some real advantage. In your grandson's case there is nothing to be gained. He is past human skill; but if we can ease his passage by relieving his mind of any part of its burden, I should not stand in the way because it might hasten the end by a brief hour or more."

Saul, lying with closed eyes, his senses preternaturally acute and sharpened by illness, heard every word the doctor spoke, and a quick thrill of gratitude and thank-

fulness ran through him. He lay quite still when his grandfather returned. He gave no sign of having heard. He was exhausted to an extent which made any sort of speech or movement impossible at the moment, and told him even more clearly than the doctor's words had done of his close approach to the dark valley. But his mind was at rest, concentrated upon the one purpose of making his peace with man, as he had already made it with God. He felt a perfect confidence that this thing also would be permitted him, and he lay calm and tranquil, resting and thinking.

He saw his grandfather moving softly about the room, saw him put out beside the fire a suit of his own (Saul's) clothes, evidently ready against a possible emergency. He saw a servant come in with food for them both, and watched through half-closed eyes while Abner ate his supper. Then he felt himself made comfortable in bed and fed with something strong and warm, which gave him an access of strength. He fell into a light sleep after that, and when he opened his eyes again, Abner was sleeping soundly in his chair—sleeping that deep sleep of utter exhaustion which always follows at last on a prolonged vigil.

Saul lay still and watched him, and then a sudden and intense desire took possession of him. He sat up in bed, and found himself strong beyond all expectation. A glass of some cordial was standing at the bedside. He took it and swallowed the potion, and rose to his feet. He crossed the room softly, still marvelling at the power which had come to him, and clad himself in the warm garments put out in readiness. Abner meantime slept on, utterly unconscious of what was passing. To Saul it all seemed like part of the same wonderful miracle which had been wrought upon his spirit by the power of the Eternal Spirit of God. His eyes had been opened at the eleventh hour to see the light; and now

the goodness of God was giving to him just that measure of physical strength which was needed to accomplish the last desire of his heart before he should be called away from this earth.

Once dressed, there was no difficulty in finding his way to the room where Eustace lay. Saul knew something of the castle, and had once been taken by Eustace himself up the staircase in the servants' wing, past the door of this very room, and into the rooms he occupied to look at some plant under the microscope. He opened the door softly, and found that the passage was lighted by a lamp. He was able to walk by supporting one shoulder against the wall and crawling slowly along. His breath was very short; every few steps he had to pause to pant, and there were strange sensations as of pressure upon his windpipe; but he felt that he had strength for what he purposed, and he persevered.

Through the swing door he passed, and into the carpeted corridor of the main block of building, and here a light was also burning, whilst the door he remembered to have opened before stood ajar. He paused there a moment and looked in. The room was empty, and beyond lay the sleeping chamber, its door half-open also. Pausing again to gather breath, Saul passed slowly through that door, and found himself in a dim and quiet chamber, where a man-servant kept a quiet watch in a chair beside the fire; and upon the bed, his eyes closed and his face quite peaceful, lay Eustace Marchmont.

But the entrance of this tall, gaunt, spectre-like figure produced an effect Saul had not calculated upon. The man-servant well knew Saul Tresithny by sight, and knew that he lay at the point of death in an adjoining chamber of the castle. Seeing this figure glide noiselessly through the door and up to the bed, he fully believed he saw the young fisherman's ghost, and springing to his feet with a cry of terror, he fled precipitately from the room, over-

come by invincible fear. The cry awoke Eustace, and the next moment he and Saul Tresithny were looking into each other's eyes—almost as men might look who had passed beyond the realms of this world and had met in the land of spirits.

"Is that you, Saul—in the flesh?" asked Eustace faintly. "I have asked for you, but never thought to see you again."

"I have come to ask forgiveness of you," cried Saul in a choked voice, sinking to his knees beside the bed, partly through physical weakness, partly through the abasement of his self-humiliation. "I am dying, sir; I am glad to die, for I know my sins are forgiven by a merciful Saviour. But oh! I feel I cannot go without your forgiveness too! I have done you so terrible an injury. Ah! let me hear you say you can forgive me even that before I go!"

The voice was choked and strained. Saul's head sank heavily upon the bed. Eustace heard the gasping breath, and a hoarse rattle in the throat, which told its own tale. With a great effort he just lifted his hand and laid it on the bowed head.

"My poor fellow," he said, "you have as much to forgive as I. May God forgive you all your sins, as I forgive all you have done amiss towards me, and as I pray I may be myself forgiven for such part and lot as I have had in much of sin that has stained your past life."

With one last effort Saul raised his head, and saw standing beside him a shining figure which he took to be one of the angels from heaven. A wonderful, radiant smile lit up his haggard face, his eyes seemed to look through and beyond those about him, and with the faint but rapturous cry—

"My Lord and my God!" he fell prone upon the bed.

Bride, aroused by the cry of the servant, had come

in hastily, clad in her white flowing wrapper, with her hair about her shoulders, and laid a soft hand upon his head as she said in a very low voice—

“Lord, into Thine Almighty Hands we commend the spirit of this our brother!” and even as she spoke the words, both she and Eustace knew that the soul of Saul Tresithny had returned to the God who gave it.





CHAPTER XXIII

BRIDE'S PROPOSAL

PAPA," said Bride softly, coming into the Duke's study and standing behind his chair with her arms loosely clasped about his neck, "will you let me marry Eustace now?"

The Duke gave a very slight start, and then sat perfectly still. He could not see Bride's face, and he was glad for a moment that his own could not be seen.

"My dear child," he said, after an appreciable pause, "do you mean that you do not know?"

"I think I know everything," answered Bride softly. "I know that Eustace will be as he is now for two or three years—perhaps all his life; but I do not think it will be that—I mean not all his life. I had a long talk before he went with the doctor from London, and he said he was almost confident that power would return, only the patient must have good nursing, care, and freedom from worry of mind, or anxious fears for himself, which might react unfavourably upon him. It is only for a few years he will be helpless; and I want to be his wife during those years, to help him through with them, to keep him from the worry and the care which I believe he will feel if he thinks he may perhaps never be a strong man again, never be able to ask me to marry him. I know that he loves me, papa, and that I can do more for him than anybody else. I know that even now he is

beginning to lose heart, not because his work is stopped—he is most wonderfully brave over that—but because he thinks he may lose me. Does it sound vain to say that? But indeed it is true. I can read Eustace through and through, because I love him so. Why should I not be his wife? Then I could nurse him back to health and strength, and he could stay here with us all the time, and we should be so happy together!”

The Duke had been silent at first from sheer amaze. He had never yet entered into all the still depths of Bride's nature; and though personally conscious of his disappointment that his daughter and heir could not now think of marriage till the health of the latter was re-established, he had never thought of a different solution of the difficulty with regard to Eustace in his helpless and lonely condition. He had been grieving over the situation in silence many long days, but the thing that Bride suggested so quietly and persuasively had never entered his head.

Yet even as she spoke there came upon him a conviction of the truth of her words. None knew better than he the comfort and support that a man can receive from a loving and tender wife. He was beginning to recognise in his daughter those very traits of character which had been so strongly developed in her mother. Well could he understand what it would be to Eustace to be nursed and tended, consoled and strengthened, by such a wife. Doubtless it would be an enormously powerful factor in his recovery, and the father had long wished with a great desire to see the future of his child settled before many more months should pass. It had been a sad blow to him to hear that Eustace's recovery must be so slow, for he felt very sure he should not live to see him on his feet again; and what would become of Bride, left so utterly alone in the world?

Now he drew her gently towards him, and she knelt

beside him at his feet, looking up into his face with a soft and lovely colour in her cheeks.

"Has Eustace spoken of this to you, my dear?" he said.

"Ah no!" she answered quickly. "Is it likely he would? He calls himself a helpless log; and I know that the worst trouble of all is, that he thinks his helplessness divides him from me. Papa, I want you to go to him. I want you to tell him that we will be married very soon—as soon as it can be arranged—and that I will nurse him back to health. Tell him that we will stay happily together here, and have only one home, here at Penarvon. I know you do not want to lose me, yet I know (for you have told me) that you would like to see me Eustace's wife. Well, it is all so easy. Do you not see it so yourself? Dearest father, I love him, and he loves me. What can anything else matter? Does not his weakness and his helplessness make me love him all the more? I want to have the right to be with him always, to lighten the load which will weigh on him, however brave and patient he is, heavily sometimes. I shall never love anybody else; and I think he will not either. Why should we wait? Why should we not have the happiness of belonging to one another before he is strong again as well as after? Why should those years be wasted for us both?"

The Duke looked into her soft, unfathomable eyes, and he ceased to oppose her.

"It shall be as you wish, my dear," he said. "I believe had it been with me as it is with Eustace, your mother would have done just what you propose to do. God has His angels here below amongst us still. I will go and speak of this to Eustace, if you wish it. You are right, my child, in saying that I would fain see you married to Eustace, since you love each other. I had not thought of this way, but perhaps it is the best."

"You will come and tell me what he says," answered Bride, with a lovely blush upon her face; and the Duke went slowly upstairs to the sick-room.

Eustace was gaining vital power rapidly and most satisfactorily, and was not paralysed in the ordinary acceptation of the term; but he had received such violent blows in the spine, either from the force of the waves whilst he was tossed to and fro at their mercy, or by being dashed upon rocks—though there were few outward bruises or cuts—that the whole nervous power had been most seriously impaired, and he could neither raise himself in bed nor move any of his limbs, although sensation was not materially affected. It was a case likely to be tedious and trying rather than dangerous or hopeless. There was every prospect of an ultimate recovery; but great patience would be needed, and any premature attempts at exertion might lead to bad results. Eustace had heard his fate with resolute courage, and had breathed no word of repining since; but a gravity had settled down upon him which deepened rather than lessened day by day; and Bride had been quick to note this, and trace it to its source.

With the Duke, the relations of the young man were now of a most cordial character. His kinsman had played a father's part to him during these past days, and his visits were always welcome in the monotony of sick-room life.

"I have been talking to Bride," said the elder man, as he took his accustomed seat; "we have been talking about your marriage, Eustace, and neither she nor I see why it should be indefinitely postponed. Indeed, there seems good reason for hastening it on, since she can then be your companion and nurse, as is not possible now, greatly as she wishes it. We cannot think of parting with you till you are well and strong once more, and that will not be for some time even at best. Have I your

authority to arrange with Mr. St. Aubyn for a marriage here as quickly as it can be arranged? Since your minds are both made up, there appears no reason why Bride should not have the comfort of caring for you and making you her charge. Perhaps you hardly estimate the joy which such a charge is to a woman of her loving nature. But you know her well enough to believe that she never speaks a word that is not literal truth; and as she wishes to have that privilege, I confess I see no legitimate objection."

Eustace had been silent, much as the Duke had been silent when the girl laid her proposal before him. Sheer astonishment and an unbounded sense of his own unworthiness and her almost divine devotion and love held him spellbound for a moment; and when his words came they were tempestuous and contradictory, declaring one moment the thing impossible—Bride's youth must not be so sacrificed—the next declaring that it was too much happiness, that he dared not accept it, because it was altogether too much joy to contemplate. The Duke let him have his fling, and then took up his word again, imposing silence by a gentle motion of the hand.

"I respect your doubts and your scruples, Eustace; but I think you need not let them weigh too heavily in the balance against your own wishes and ours. I will take you into my confidence, and I think you will then see that even for Bride's sake this thing is a good one. She does not know it, but I have a mortal illness upon me, which may carry me off at any moment, though I may perhaps be spared some few years longer. I myself consulted the physician whom we summoned for you, and he admitted that my life was a bad one, and that with my family history I must not look to be spared much longer. You know how lonely Bride would be were I taken from her. You can imagine how greatly I desire to see her settled in life with a husband to love and cherish her.

Were I to die whilst you were thus laid aside, you must of necessity be separated, and where would Bride go? What would she do? Money is not everything. A home—a husband's care—that is what a woman wants. Eustace, if you are made man and wife now, all this anxiety will be done away, and the happiness of all will be secured. Will you not consent? It all rests with you, for I desire it, and Bride desires it—I think you desire it——”

“Only too much!” cried Eustace, with such a light in his eyes as had not been seen there for weeks, “only too much. I am afraid of my own intensity of desire.”

“If that is all, we may dismiss the objection as frivolous,” said the Duke with a slight smile. “Then I have your consent to make the arrangements? I will go and tell Bride, and send her to you.”

She came within half-an-hour, calm, tranquil, serene as ever, a lovely colour in her face, but no other outward sign of excitement or confusion. Her eyes sought his with one of those glances he had learned to look for and treasure; and when she came to his side she bent and kissed him, which hitherto she had not made a habit of doing.

“Bride,” he said softly, getting possession of her hand, “is this true?”

“Yes, Eustace,” she answered softly; “I do not think we can love each other more than we do; but we can belong to each other more when we have been joined together by God. That is what I want, to be one with you in His sight, so that nothing can part us more.”

He looked earnestly at her, the love in his eyes as eloquent as it was in hers, and scarcely as much under control.

“You are not afraid, my darling? You were afraid of trusting yourself to me once?”

“Yes,” she answered gently; “I had not learned to love you then, and you had not learned love either. You have

only learned that slowly, as I have learned it slowly myself."

"How do you know I have learned it—the love which you mean?"

She looked at him with a smile that brought an answering smile to his face.

"Do you think I have been with you all these weeks, in and out, by day and night, and have not known that? Do you forget how you showed it in those days when you seemed to be slipping away from life, and only the eternal promises of everlasting love and help could reach you to help and strengthen you? You did not talk, but you made us talk to you, and your eyes gave their answer. You found then that it was not a beautiful philosophy, but a living Saviour you wanted; not an abstraction representing an ideal purity, but a Man, the one Incarnate Son of God, to whom you must cling in the darkness of the night. Ah! Eustace, it was then that you truly turned back to the Father's house; and I know that the Father came out to meet you, and to bring you into His safe shelter. I knew He would—oh! I think I have known that for a long time now; but the joy of the certainty is so wonderful and beautiful——"

Her voice broke, and she turned her head away for a moment, but he said softly—

"The angels of God rejoicing over one sinner that repenteth? Is that it, Bride? For you are a veritable angel upon earth!"

"Ah no!" she answered quickly, "do not say that—do not think it. Holy and blessed as the angels of God are, we have yet a higher vocation—a higher calling to live up to. It is a human body, not an angelic body, that our Lord took and sanctified to all eternity. It is for fallen human creatures, not for the angels, that He came down to die. And it is glorified human beings, changed into His glorious likeness, who are called to live and reign with Him in

glory unspeakable. I never want to be an angel. Ours is a more truly blessed and glorious calling. To be His at His coming. To hear His voice, and be caught up to meet Him in the air. To be ever with the Lord—kings and priests for ever and ever! O Eustace! we cannot conceive of such a thing yet; but the day *will* come when the kingdoms of this world shall become the Kingdoms of our God and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever!"

The face she turned upon him was as it were transfigured already, and it seemed to Eustace as though for a moment a curtain lifted before his eyes and showed him a glimpse of some unspeakable glory which lay beyond the ken of mortal man. For the first time since he had known her he began to understand that what had seemed to him as the outcome of a mystic fanaticism might be in reality the development of some purer spiritual understanding than he had been able to attain to. Lying for days at the gate of the unseen world as he had done, he had learned that many things formerly slighted and almost despised were the very things which brought a man peace at the last, and which glowed and strengthened beneath the mysterious fire of peril that turned to dross and nothingness the wisdom in which he had trusted, and the staff upon which he had tried to lean. Having learned this much, he could believe there was more to learn; that even when fear was cast out and faith reigned in its stead, there was still progress to be made in the heavenly life. He did indeed believe that the Saviour had died for the sins of the whole world, and that He lived to make intercession eternally for those who claimed the Atonement of His blood. But now he began to understand that for those who truly love Him and walk every step of their lives in the light from above, there is a vision of unspeakable and unimagined glory always open before them; and that, leaving those things

that are behind, there is a continual pressing forward to the prize of our high calling in Christ—the one overmastering desire so to live as to be His at His coming, and be used for His eternal purpose of establishing His Kingdom on the earth.

“Bride,” he said softly, after a long pause, “you must teach me more of this Kingdom. I had hoped to do a great work for our fellow-men in this land, and even now I may live to do something; but I can at least seek to understand God’s ways of working, which are not always man’s ways; that if it please Him to raise me up, I may consecrate my life, *first* to His service, and secondly to the service of man. Abner truly told me I was beginning at the wrong end when I first spoke to him long ago. I did not understand him then, but I begin to do so now. I may never see things clearly, as you do, in the heavenly light; but at least I do see that our first aim and object must be to do God’s work on earth in His way; not blinded by our own wishes and ambitions. The fate of poor Saul Tresithny will always be a warning and a landmark to me. He *might* have grown as wild and reckless without my teaching—with that I have nothing to do—but I did teach him dangerous doctrines of all sorts, and his life and death are a standing memorial to me of what such teaching may lead to. I trust the lesson has not been learned in vain.”

“And I think his death was a very happy one,” said Bride softly. “I think I am glad he died with us alone. He loved you, Eustace. And I am sure if any of us had our choice, we should always choose to be with the being we love best at the moment of our death. It was so with him. I think it was rather beautiful and wonderful how he rose and came to you when the hand of death was upon him. Poor Saul!—but we need not grieve for him. Abner has ceased to grieve, and is

more peaceful and happy than I have seen him for many years. 'To depart and be with Christ' was so much better for him than anything he had to expect upon earth. He learned his lesson at the last—I am sure his end was peace."

After that there was no reserve on any subject between Eustace and his betrothed wife. Bride was able to speak to him from the very depths of her heart, and as she elevated and strengthened his spiritual perceptions, so did he in another fashion impart to her such knowledge of the things of this world as were beneficial to her in forming her mind and character, and helping her to obtain a just and accurate outlook upon the affairs of the nation and the events moving the hearts of men. They acted as a check one upon the other; helping, strengthening, teaching, and encouraging—growing every day nearer in love and in spirit, finding fresh happiness and closer unity of soul each day as it passed, and always upheld by the thought that a few days more would see their union hallowed and blessed in the sight of God—a thought so unspeakably sweet and precious to both that they seldom spoke of it, though it was never altogether out of their thoughts.

Mr. St. Aubyn was to perform the ceremony, with the cordial consent of Mr. Tremodart, who was glad to be spared the task himself. The Rector of St. Erme had been much at the castle when Eustace lay in so critical a state, and the young man had profited much from his instruction and counsel. Now he came frequently to see both Bride and her betrothed husband, for he was one of those who rejoice to see true spirituality in all its forms, and to be certain before hearing pronounced any solemn and binding vows that they are spoken from the very heart.

The Duke went about looking very happy in those days, and his manner to his daughter was more gentle

and fatherly than it had ever been before. The whole castle was in a subdued state of excitement, whilst a lawyer from London arrived, who was to remain till the completion of the ceremony and see to all the needful papers. But with these things Bride felt little concern, and went about with a tranquil face, thankful to be spared the bustle of preparation which would have been needful under ordinary circumstances, but which was quite superfluous now.

A bridal dress and veil were, however, quickly provided, and Bride was content that it should be so, knowing that her white would be pleasing to the eye of the sick man. She herself was calmly and tranquilly happy, spending much time beside the patient, and the rest in earnest musings and meditation, or in visits to the poor, amongst whom so much of her life had been passed.

It was a clear, sunny morning toward the end of January when Bride awoke with the consciousness that it was her wedding-day—though so quiet and uneventful a wedding as was to be hers perhaps no Duke's daughter had yet known. Even her name would not be changed, as Eustace had playfully told her, nor would she leave the shelter of her father's roof. All the change that would take place would be that she and her husband would take up their quarters in a suite of rooms specially prepared for them, with Bride's nurse and Eustace's man for their especial attendants. But the young wife would continue to take her place at her father's table when he took his meals, waiting upon her husband and sharing his at different hours, such hours as were prescribed by his medical man. Although all this sounded strange to outsiders, who heard with amaze that Lady Bride was going to marry her father's heir while he was still crippled and helpless, it did not seem strange to her. Others said it was an obvious marriage of convenience and diplomacy, but never had been a marriage of purer and truer

affection. Bride robed herself with a happy heart and a serene face, and was not surprised to receive a message at the last that Abner would much like a few words with his young mistress, if she could spare them for him.

He was in the great conservatory when she went down—the place where so many talks had taken place between them, and where Bride pictured Eustace lying in comfort and pleasure before very long, surrounded by sweet scents and beautiful blossoms. Abner held in his hand a beautiful bouquet of white flowers, and Bride thanked him with one of her sweetest smiles as she took it from his hands.

“I did want to see yu my own self, my Ladybird,” he said in a voice that shook a little, “to wish yu every joy and a blessing on your new life. I know there will be a blessing on it, for there’s One above as has yu very near His heart; but yu’ll let an old man as has loved yu ever since yu were a babe in the nurse’s arms give yu his blessing to-day.”

Bride held out her slim white hand, which the old man took and carried very tenderly to his lips; and her voice shook a little as she said, “Thank you for that blessing, Abner. I feel my heart the warmer for it. We know that this world’s happiness is but a small thing compared to the glory that is to be revealed; but yet we must be thankful when it does come to us, and take it as God’s best gift. I think that your heart is at peace now, and that your worst trouble is laid at rest.”

“Bless the Lord—it is so indeed. My boy died with His name on his lips. I couldn’t ask more for myself.”

Bride could not linger. Mr. St. Aubyn had already arrived and wished to speak with her alone. She found him pacing the room with slow and thoughtful mien, but his eyes were very bright and glad.

“My child,” he said softly, “I wished to speak with you a few moments before we go upstairs. I have just

been seeing him you are to wed. My dear, I think I need not say all that I feel about the change I find in him since first I knew him. I can pronounce the benediction of holy matrimony over you two with a glad and thankful heart. In the sight of man and of God such a union as yours must be holy indeed."

Bride's eyes were softly bright.

"I know we love one another," she said softly, "but I think that the love of God comes first—indeed, I trust it is so."

"I believe so truly," he answered; "and, my child, I have been talking to-day to Eustace. He has long been hindered by sickness from the ordinances of the Church—the most blessed ordinance instituted by our Lord for His faithful people to follow until His coming again. Before that, as you know, he was something slack and doubtful, and did not avail himself of the Christian privileges in their fullest measure; and it is long since he has partaken of the bread and wine blessed in the name of the Lord. And he wishes now that he may receive this Holy Communion with you—his newly wedded wife—so soon as you are made one. I indeed have thankfully and joyfully assented to this, and even now the room is being prepared for the simple ceremony which shall make you his, and then you can together partake of that Body and Blood—the sign and symbol of the Ineffable Love. I am sure, my child, that your heart will rejoice, as mine does, over this return of the lost sheep to the fold. We have known for long that that son has been turning homewards, and that the Father has gone forth to meet him. Now we shall see him at the Father's table, partaking of the mystical feast which it is our Christian privilege to enjoy. 'Do this in remembrance of Me.' It will, I know, be a joyous thing for you that the following of this gracious and simple command shall be the first act of your married life."

Tears were standing in Bride's soft eyes. She put out her hand and laid it on Mr. St. Aubyn's arm.

"I am too happy to talk about it," she said; "it is the one thing to make the day complete; but oh! Mr. St. Aubyn, I have so often wanted to thank you for what you said to me that day long ago about the lost son and the returning home. It was such a help. It was that which made me begin to pray in hope for Eustace, instead of naming him only in a sort of faithless despondency. I was in danger of being like the elder brother, and looking upon him and many others as altogether beyond the pale of the Father's love. After that I could always pray in hope; and I think—I believe, that my prayers did help him. You know what you said about that being God's way of leading to Him some one who would not yet pray for himself."

The clergyman smiled tenderly upon the girl.

"God bless you, my child," he said softly. "I think you will be your mother over again as the years go by. Such faith as hers I have never seen in any one else, but I think I shall live to see it in you."

"I have received so much," answered Bride softly, "I should not be able to doubt even if I wished."

Only a few minutes later, and Bride entered the room where Eustace lay, leaning on her father's arm, her face shaded by her veil, but not so concealed that its serene beauty and composure could not be seen. Some dozen of the old servants of the castle, and two or three old friends, were present to witness the simple ceremony; but Bride only saw Eustace; and none who caught the glance that flashed from one to the other ever forgot it. The room was decked with flowers, everything was perfectly simple, yet perfectly appropriate, and Mr. St. Aubyn's rendering of the holy words was doubly impressive from the peculiar circumstances of the case. Bride's vows were spoken with a steady sweetness which brought tears to many eyes; all

the faltering was on Eustace's part, and was made through the depth of his emotion. It was a strangely simple yet strangely impressive wedding, never forgotten by those who saw it. When all was spoken that was needed to make them man and wife, Bride stooped and kissed her husband, without a thought of any who stood by, and they heard the passionate intensity of love in the voice that responded—

“My Bride—my wife!”





CHAPTER XXIV

CONCLUSION

BRIDE was riding homewards from Pentreath to the castle on a sunny day early in June. The sound of joy-bells was in the air, the faces of men were glad and triumphant, all nature seemed in tune with the general rejoicing which some recent event had plainly set on foot; and the young wife's face was glad, too, though thoughtfully and temperately. For she knew that the news of which she was the bearer would gladden the heart of her husband, though it would not be to him now that source of triumphant exhilaration which it would have been a year before.

Behind her rode the servant with a bag full of papers at his saddle-bow. It was these letters and newspapers which had been the object of Bride's ride that day. Her husband had persuaded her to go herself on the chance of news; he was always glad to make an excuse to induce her to take the amount of needful air and exercise which was good for her health, and she always found it so hard to leave him.

But to-day she had been persuaded, and was now riding rapidly homewards with her budget of news, knowing how impatiently her husband and father at home would be awaiting her return.

Dismounting at the castle door, and taking the bag from the hands of the servant, she passed hastily through

hall and corridor into the great conservatory, where Eustace was now daily wheeled upon his couch. Since the beginning of May he had been taken down to a ground-floor room in the wing which he and his wife occupied, in order that, when possible, he might be taken out of doors, or into this pleasant place of flowers. He had made as much progress as the most sanguine could hope for during the past months, and recovery was considered now only a matter of time and patience. Time and patience were the only doctors for such a case as his, and Eustace surprised all who came in contact with him by the extreme patience and cheerfulness he showed under a condition of helplessness so trying to youthful manhood; but he would say, with a smile, that *Bride* made life too sweet for him for any repining to be possible. Each day he found filled with happiness—the happiness of her presence, and of that full community of soul which made their union what it was. Every day brought its own measure of temporal happiness and spiritual growth; and though the young man looked forward with ardent expectation to the hope of being able to fight the battle of life once more, and work in the service of his fellow-men, he recognised fully and freely that this period of enforced idleness had been sent him by the Father in mercy and love, and was resolved that the lesson it was sent to teach him should not be learnt in vain.

The way in which his face kindled at the sight of his wife was a sight good to see. She came quickly forward, bent over and kissed him, and said softly—

“It is good news, Eustace. The Lords have passed the bill!”

“Ah!” he said, and drew a long breath. “I felt it would be so when the King was obliged to recall Lord Grey. All parties must have known then that the mind of the country was made up, and that the thing was right, and must be made law. Have you read the news?”

“No; I only heard what they were all saying in Pentreath. I met many friends, and they all told me something. The Duke of Wellington, when he found the King would create enough new peers to pass the bill, if that was the only resource left, retired from his place in the House, and, some say, will retire from public life altogether. Lord Wharnccliffe and his party of waverers came over at once to the side of Lord Grey, and so the bill was passed at once. The people are wild with delight, the bells are being rung, and bonfires are being built up. I sometimes wonder whether they really understand what it is that they rejoice at. They seem to think that some wonderfully good time is coming for them. Poor creatures! I fear they will be disappointed. An act of constitutional justice has been done; but the troubles of England lie far, far deeper than an imperfect system of constitutional representation.”

Eustace was eagerly skimming the contents of newspapers and private letters, and from time to time giving bits of information to his wife; but the sense of her words came home to his mind for all that, and by-and-bye, laying down the papers, he said—

“That is only too true, Bride. That is the very point upon which my eyes have been opened latterly. I used to think that good government and pure government was the backbone of a nation’s prosperity and well-being—as in one sense of the word it is. I mean, that if all men were doing their utmost to walk in the ways appointed by God, we should have a pure and good government, and the nation would prosper. But I see only too clearly now that I was quite deceived in my old belief that this country and the world can ever be renovated and made good by any scheme of political reform instituted by man. We may do our best to be just and temperate, to act uprightly, and think impartially of the interests of all classes; but that alone will

never raise them, never give them true happiness, never lift them out of the degradation into which they, as well as too many of us so-called 'superiors,' have fallen. There is only one Power which can do that, only one Power mighty enough for that task, and that is the Power of which I fear that we, as a nation of politicians and upright rulers, think singularly little. The time may come when we shall awake to the remembrance that God must be Ruler in the earth if right and justice and equity are to be done; but at present, though we listen to such words with approval from the pulpit, we are absolutely ignorant how to put them into daily practice, and our profession and practice are utterly at variance. That is where our failure comes in, and where I, for one, foresee failure all along the line. This bill may be the inauguration of an enlightened and liberal policy for the next generation; but my old hope of seeing the world raised out of its misery, its degradation, its wickedness by any such means, is fading fast within me."

Bride was silent for a while, looking out before her with a sweet sad smile upon her fair face.

"It will not be achieved by such means," she said quietly at last; "and yet, if men would but look to the Lord for help and deliverance, I truly believe He would show us the perfect way, and restore to us those things which are lacking in the order of our daily lives, of our worship, of our government. We know that the powers that be are ordained of God; but we have lost so much of His guidance. Yet I verily believe that if men would with one voice and one heart cry to Him for light and guidance, He would send it to them, even as in days of old. Is He not the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever? Though we have forsaken Him, yet He has not forsaken us. As He spoke by holy men of old, moved by His Spirit, so I truly believe He would speak again had men

but faith to listen. But it is that which is always the stumbling-block—the hindrance. Men have lost their faith; they will not believe that God is still amongst them, even as of old—nay, far more truly and nearly than of old; for Christ is the living Head of His Church, and all who believe and are baptized are very members of His mystical Body. And yet we say He is far away, He has passed into the heavens, He is no more working with and amongst us, save through the workings of the Spirit in our hearts. But I feel so very, very sure that, would we let Him, He would fain be much more to us than that, as indeed He will be one day—in the day when the Kingdom shall be set up on earth.”

Eustace drew a long breath. He, too, lying there in helplessness, and seeing much of the brightness of his early visions fade into dimness as he watched the course of events and learned to see more of the workings of this world, had come to think with a great longing of the coming Kingdom, when all that is vile and evil shall be done away, and when Christ Himself shall be revealed and rule in righteousness. Once that thought had seemed to him as the veriest vision of the mystic; now he had come to long for it himself with a great and increasing longing. Loving his fellow-men as he did, he yet loved the Lord more; and to see Him reigning over the world, and the misery and the sin all done away, was a prospect too bright and happy not to excite his ardent longings. Even in his satisfaction at the news just brought, he could yet think with calm hopefulness of the time when the crooked things should be made straight, and the rough places plain, and men should live together in peace and love, and strivings and hatred should be done away.

“And until that day comes,” he said softly at last, “we shall do more to help our brethren by teaching them to look for the Kingdom of God and of His Christ,

than by stirring up in their hearts desires after earthly good which perhaps may never be theirs."

Bride looked up with a sweet smile.

"Ah! that is just what I feel about it, Eustace; let us do all that is right for them, but teach them to strive after contentment and love of God themselves. That is the only thing that will really raise them or make them truly happy."

"Seek ye first——" said Eustace musingly, not finishing the quotation, for there was no need. "After all, that is the best and highest wisdom, though for eighteen hundred years men have had the answer to their strivings and heart-burnings under their hand, and have not known how to use it. You must help me, sweet wife, in the future, when I go forth, as I trust by God's mercy I may, to take my place in the battle of life, and stand up for the right and the truth, as I may be called upon to do, to bear in mind that great precept, for without it we can accomplish nothing."

Bride gave him an eloquent glance, but made no reply, for her father was coming in, anxious to know the news.

She told her tale once more, and the papers were read and discussed between the two men with eager interest. It was strange how, by almost imperceptible degrees, those two had drawn together—not entirely in opinion, but in mutual understanding and sympathy, so that differences of opinion seemed trifles. Now it was real pleasure to both to be together; and though they still argued and disputed, it was in a spirit of toleration and mutual respect and liking which made such argument pleasant and stimulating rather than irritating. The Duke took a more despondent view of the future of the country than Eustace, and had far less confidence in the success of the coming era of more liberal principles of government for redressing wrongs and bringing about a

lasting state of prosperity and peace; but then Eustace was far less sanguine about the coming Utopia, far more patient and reasonable when existing wrongs were discussed, far less confident in the powers of legislation for the elevation of mankind than he once had been. Like many other ardent young dreamers in the forefront of the battle of reform, he had practically left out of his calculations the mystery of original sin—the inherent corruption of men's hearts, and their perversity of vision, their determination to do evil until their eyes are opened to see God's dealings in all things, and their hearts are purified by the Holy Spirit. No system, however perfect, will ever make men righteous that does not first lead them to God. It was this that Eustace had never realised before when he sought to raise men by increased prosperity, and wiser and more just legislation. Now he had begun to see the futility of his former dreams, and insensibly he grew to sympathise with the feelings of his kinsman, who had lived through so many crises of the world's history, but had found at the end that human nature was never changed, and that no era of bliss and joy followed upon the violent efforts made to secure a better order of things.

Leaving them to talk thus together and to discuss the situation to their hearts' content, Bride stole away into the garden, and wandered along some of the shady paths, thinking her own thoughts, and filled with a sense of profound thankfulness and joy in the unity of spirit now existing between herself and her husband. It was the same daily joy to her that it was to him, and her heart was charged with a peace and restful content that sometimes seemed to her to be a foretaste of the Kingdom itself, towards which her heart was always turning.

In one of the alleys of the rose-garden she came upon Abner, who was tying up the young shoots upon the arch, and picking off the dead blossoms. He welcomed

her with the smile that the sight of her always called up in his eyes, and stood still with a face full of interest whilst she told him the news.

"Well, well, well," he said when she had done, "may be it'll be a good thing. It sounds just, and right, and reasonable; but I don't understand these big matters, and there's a deal to be said on both sides, so far as I can see. My poor boy would have been pleased. He was terrible set on it; but I used to think that when he got it, he would find himself as discontented as ever, and set off after some new teacher who would tell him this was only the beginning of what men must demand. May be he sees things clearer now. I sometimes think we'll know a deal better what to think of such matters once we are free of the burden of the sinful flesh. But there's always comfort in the thought that the Lord's working in one way or another in all these things. He sees the fulfilment of His purpose all through, though we can't. That's what I comfort myself with when things seem blackest. The frost and the snow, the biting winds and the storms, all seem against the gardener; but by-and-bye he sees they all have their use, and his plants would not have done as well without them. I always go back to that when I'm perplexed and worried. The great Gardener will bring out His perfected garden on the earth in time; and it should be enough for us to be trying to help Him on in our little corner, without thinking He can't rule the world without us."

Bride smiled as she answered softly—

"Yes; though perhaps He wants to use some of us for great tasks, as He uses us all for little ones. But I know what you mean, Abner, and I feel with you. We can never fully understand God's purposes till they are revealed to us in His perfect Kingdom; but we can all strive to live the life of the Kingdom here below, as far as our sinful natures will let us, and try to make just

the little corner about us bear flowers and fruit, as a garden should. I do not think we shall be called upon for any great work. I think our lot will lie here, away in the west, in this little place. But, for my part, I shall be content if we can bring the hope and the life of the Kingdom into just this little corner of the vineyard—to our sisters and brothers of St. Bride's Bay."

THE END

